

BOOKS Printed for F. and J. NOBLE.

- 1 **A** Dopted Daughter, 2 vol. 6s
- 2 **A** Akenfide on the Bloody Flux, 2s
- 3 Adventures of the Marq. of Noailles, 2 vol. 6s
- 4 Apparition, or Female Cavalier, 3 vol. 9s
- 5 Bracelet, or Fortunate Discovery, 2 vol. 6s
- 6 Bubbled Knights, 2 vol. — — 6s
- 7 Child's Entertainer, a Collect. of Riddles, 6d
- 8 Country Cousins, 2 vol. — — 6s
- 9 Conflict, or Hist. of Miss Fanbrook, 3 vol. 9s
- 10 Devil upon Crutches in England, — 3s
- 11 Double Disappointment, a Farce — 1s
- 12 Entanglement, 2 vol. — — 6s
- 13 Eliza, or Hist. of Miss Granville, 2 vol. 6s
- 14 Each Sex in their Humour, 2 vol. — 6s
- 15 Fortune-Teller, 2 vol. — — 6s
- 16 Female American, 2 vol. — — 5s
- 17 Fortunate Villager, 2 vol. — — 6s
- 18 History of Sir Harry Herald, 3 vol. 9s
- 19 History of a Young Lady, 2 vol. — 6s
- 20 History of the Plague in 1665, — 6s
- 21 History of Miss Cathcart, 2 vol. — 6s
- 22 History of my own Life, 2 vol. — 6s
- 23 History of Frederick the Forsaken, 2 vol. 6s
- 24 History of Frank Hammond — 3s
- 25 History of Miss Sally Sable, 2 vol. 6s
- 26 Hist. of Mr. Byron & Miss Greville, 2 vol. 6s
- 27 Hist. of Sir Roger and his Son Joe, 2 vol. 6s
- 28 History of two Persons of Quality — 3s
- 29 History of Miss Emilia Beville, 2 vol. 6s
- 30 History of Emily Willis, 2 vol. — 6s
- 31 History of Charles Lord Sommers, 2 vol. 6s
- 32 Hist. of Mr. Moreton & Miss Bamstead, 6s
- 33 History of Miss Kitty N—, — 3s
- 34 History of Lady Louisa Stroud, 2 vol. 6s
- 35 Hist. of Miss Lu cinda Courtney, 3 vol. 9s
- 36 History

BOOKS Printed for F. and J. NOBLE.

- 36 History of Miss Harriot Fitzroy, 2 vol. 6s
 37 History of Amanda — — 3s
 38 History of Charles Chance — — 3s
 39 History of Mrs. Drayton, 3 vol. — 9s
 40 History of the Arabians, 4 vol. — 16s
 41 Jilts, or Female Fortune Hunters, 2 vol. 9s
 42 King Lear, a Tragedy, altered by Tate, 6d
 43 Life of Crusoe Richard Davis, 2 vol. 6s
 44 Life of Hamilton Murray, 3 vol. — 9s
 45 Muse in Good Humour, 2 vol. — 6s
 46 Muse in a Moral Humour, 2 vol. — 6s
 47 Mother-in-Law, 2 vol. — — 6s
 48 Memoirs of a Coquette — — 4s
 49 Moral and Critical Reflections — 3s
 50 Memoirs of a Scotch Family, 2 vol. 6s
 51 Nunnery, or Hist. of Miss Howard, 2 vol. 5s
 52 Rival Mother, 2 vol. — — 6s
 53 Reformed Coquette — — 2s
 54 Supposed Daughter, 3 vol. — — 9s
 55 Singleton's Voyages and Adventures 3s
 56 True Merit True Happiness, 2 vol. 6s
 57 Voyages and Travels of Capt. Holmesby, 3s
 58 Virtuous Criminal, 2 vol. — — 6s
 59 Van's Life and Adventures, 2 vol. 6s
 60 Ways to kill Care, a Collect. of Songs, 1s 6d

— *Next Month will be Published,*
 (In Two Volumes, Price 6s bound)

THE
 HAPPY EXTRAVAGANT:

OR,
 Memoirs of CHARLES CLAIRVILLE, Esq;

Printed for F. and J. NOBLE.

THE
FORCE OF NATURE;
OR, THE
HISTORY
OF
CHARLES LORD SOMMERS:
IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. II.

By the EDITOR of the WANDERER.

ALL NATURE's dictates carefully obey;
Erring from her you miss th' ETERNAL way.

If a good man would consult his own HEART, he would
generally find it the wisest of counsellors. ANON.

L O N D O N :

Printed for FRANCIS NOBLE, at his Circulating Library,
near Middle-Row, Holborn;

A N D

JOHN NOBLE, at his Circulating Library, in St.
Martin's Court, near Leicester Square.

MDCCCLXVIII.

THE
 FORCE OF NATURE
 OR THE
 HISTORY
 OF
 CHARLES LORD SOMMERS:
 IN TWO VOLUMES.
 VOL II.

By the Hon. the WANDERER.



It is a great mistake to suppose that the
 history of a nation is the history of its
 kings and queens. It is the history of
 the people, of their struggles and their
 triumphs, of their hopes and their fears.

LONDON:
 Printed for J. and J. Moore, at the
 Strand, near St. Dunstons Church.
 1794.
 J. and J. Moore, at the
 Strand, near St. Dunstons Church.
 1794.

THE
FORCE of NATURE;
OR, THE
HISTORY
OF

CHARLES Lord SOMMERS.

LETTER XLI.

MISS CECILIA SYMPSON to MISS EMILIA
BLAND.

October 14.

^{is} ^{it}
IT is possible, my dear Emily that
there can be such a knot of men
existing in a christian country, and

VOL. II.

B

what

what is worse a nobleman at the head of them. Ramble, Leland, Edmonds, and the earl of M****. Heavens! what a set of wretches. But you desired to have the particulars of my story, which I had not time before to communicate to you.—They are these :

A few months since, Mr. Ramble, came to our house, where he took particular notice of me, and behaved in such a manner as attracted my father's esteem, and engaged my own particular attention. He even affected to address me, which I plainly perceived would be very agreeable in the eyes of my parent. He sometimes

times brought with him a very decent young woman, whom he called sister, and who, he said, lived at some distance in the country. She was received likewise with great civility, and paid great court to me.

We had been a long time acquainted, when Mr. Ramble busily one day entered with a letter in his hand.

“Unhappy that I am, said he, this letter summons me into the country, and seperates me from my Cecilia!”

I could perceive my father's countenance alter, as he pronounced these words: he used every artifice he was master of to get from him the reason

4 The Force of Nature; or,

of his leaving town; which at last the artful deceiver suffered, as it were, to be wrung from him, and, with a sigh and down-cast looks, owned, he believed it was concerning marriage. "Yet would I rather suffer any thing than match myself with any but Cecilia; but" said he, "my uncle is the most peremptory man in the world." Then, taking my hand, he sighed over it, and poured forth a profusion of tender speeches, with which, believing him sincere, I cannot but own I was in some measure affected. He departed soon after, leaving his sister, however, behind him, who remained some time at our house

house by invitation. In return for this civility, at her departure, she pressed my father very hard to suffer me to go and reside a few weeks with her in the country. "We are, said she, but homely people.—My Husband is a plain country gentleman, of a small fortune, and less ceremony; but I'll engage Miss Cecilia will be a welcome guest to us both; and perhaps, when my brother has settled his intricate affairs we shall have his company." The old gentleman acquiesced very easily in this desire of a person of whose brother he had so good an opinion, and whose alliance he so ardently wished.

I accordingly prepared for my journey. Meanwhile, letters were received from Mr. Ramble, in which he made great professions of constancy, and talked much of his sufferings for my sake with his uncle. Our respect for this unworthy man was heightened by the good character we had of him from the earl of M****, and some others, who have since proved his associates in iniquity.

When I arrived at the house in — shire, whether I was invited, I found the family in all appearance such as it had been represented to me. But before I had long remained there, Mr.

Ramble

Ramble himself arrived. He behaved at first with the greatest and tenderest respects; renewing at the same time his addresses to me, and informing me, that he had with great difficulty escaped the match proposed to him by his uncle. But this did not last long.

—When some weeks had passed in this manner, I began to think of returning to London, whither he proposed to accompany me: He insisted, however, on my staying a day or two longer: I did so; and to my great surprise, within that short period of time, found things strangely altered. His supposed sister's husband left us, and she herself was transformed into

his servant: I could not help expressing my surprise at this change in the face of affairs to Mr. Ramble: he only smiled, and said, I should see still greater changes, if I would stay there a little longer, “and, added he, looking full in my face, and devouring as it were, my features, I doubt not but I shall use such forcible arguments as will prevail on you to do me that favour.”—He left me for that time, alone; but returning soon after, began to speak of his love in warmer terms than I had ever heard him; then caught me in his arms and kissed and pressed me ardently.—I blushed, and struggled; but attributed all

all to his wildness of temper. However, at length I began to be somewhat alarmed, and in a peremptory tone commanded him to desist, as he valued my love and esteem. “Love
“and esteem!” said he, laughing,
“My dear girl, do not be so romantic. I doat on you; I languish for
“the possession of your beauties: I
“know I am not disagreeable to you:
“your eyes declare I am not; then
“throw aside your bashfulness, insist
“not on dull ceremonies, nor seek
“to load our love with such ties as
“must one day prove its destruction;
“but listen to the voice of Nature,
“which at this very instant com-

“mands you to make at once your-
“self and your lover happy.” These
words, together with the action that
accompanied them (for again with
vehemence he clasped me in his arms)
astonished and alarmed me. I broke
from him, and expressed my surprise
and disapprobation in terms the most
warm and forcible that could be con-
ceived. He answered not, but by a
repetition of his former behaviour, and
some added indecencies, which occa-
sioned me to scream and struggle so
violently as threw me into fits, in
which he left me, cursing me, as I
afterwards heard, for a perverse, pru-
dish fool, and vowing I should not so
escape

escape him. From that period I found myself a close prisoner in my chamber, which I was as particularly careful to secure every night on the inside, as my gaolers were cautious to make it fast without.

Thus I remained till one evening, my door being opened to receive some refreshment, Mr. Ramble, being warm with wine, rushed suddenly into the room, and, seizing me, would probably have completed his vile designs upon my chastity, had not a violent knocking, at that instant, alarmed him; in consequence of which his pretended sister came up, and saying some-

something to him, without regarding my deplorable situation (for I had swooned away) he ran down stairs, muttering some horrid oaths, and on my recovery, I was informed by the duenna, that her brother seeing me so obstinate and untractable, had resolved to send me back to my father's in London ; but that had I been complying, he would, in the end, have married me, and I might have made my fortune for ever. Improbable as all this might appear, my condition was such as did not suffer me to reason upon the matter. Pleased with the very name of my father's house, and willing to exchange, though it should

should be for a dungeon, the place of my confinement, I suffered myself to be hurried into a coach with my duenna, which proceeded not towards London, but directly contrary, on the great Western road ; where Providence threw me in the way of my father, as you, my dear, have heard, by the breaking the axle-tree of our carriage, which obliged us to put up at that very inn where he had stopped. To describe our meeting would be next to an impossibility ; but we were so much taken up with the joy which it occasioned, that Ramble's pretended sister found an opportunity to steal into the coach, which proved to be one
of

something to him, without regarding my deplorable situation (for I had swooned away) he ran down stairs, muttering some horrid oaths, and on my recovery, I was informed by the duenna, that her brother seeing me so obstinate and untractable, had resolved to send me back to my father's in London ; but that had I been complying, he would, in the end, have married me, and I might have made my fortune for ever. Improbable as all this might appear, my condition was such as did not suffer me to reason upon the matter. Pleased with the very name of my father's house, and willing to exchange, though it should

should be for a dungeon, the place of my confinement, I suffered myself to be hurried into a coach with my duenna, which proceeded not towards London, but directly contrary, on the great Western road ; where Providence threw me in the way of my father, as you, my dear, have heard, by the breaking the axle-tree of our carriage, which obliged us to put up at that very inn where he had stopped. To describe our meeting would be next to an impossibility ; but we were so much taken up with the joy which it occasioned, that Ramble's pretended sister found an opportunity to steal into the coach, which proved to be one of

of Leland's, and drove off unperceived. My father, as soon as he had lodged me safely in London, went with all expedition in pursuit of the seducer.

What an excellent husband must this Leland make to the accomplished lady you mentioned! Your ruin, my unhappiness, with innumerable mischiefs, are chargeable on him and his detestable party, who seem, as it were the perpetual agents of the author of evil. But who, my dear, is this angel, that is solliciting the discharge of your distressed father?— Surely he is one whom Heaven has
formed

formed in opposition to this devilish
junto.

Adieu ! my Emily ; that the same
Providence which has been watchful to
preserve me from ruin, may support
you in your afflictions, and at the last
crown you with happiness, is the ar-
dent wish of

Your sincere

CECILIA.*

* These ladies had been acquainted long be-
fore Ramble was introduced to Miss Simpson.

L E T T E R XLII.

Sir JOHN GRETTON to Miss A. HALE.

STILL, Madam, do we seek in vain for our Charlotte. All we can learn is, that a post-chaise was seen, a few days since, driving very swiftly on the Western road, which carried a female passenger, who at intervals screamed very violently ; but owing to the great expedition with which the carriage proceeded, nobody had address enough to stop it, and to enquire into this extraordinary affair. But after all this, how can we possibly be certain that my niece was the person ?

Pardon

Pardon me, Miss Hale, I cannot think how a young person of such sense and talents as Charlotte is generally allowed to possess, could be thus ravished from her friends, and afterwards so many days concealed from the world, without her own consent. Such miracles do not frequently happen ; and, I must confess, I have no great faith in them.

I cannot help repeating that Mr. Gower is still absent : I do not say Charlotte is with him ;—I *hope* she is not ;—but excuse my doubts. My kinswoman has not, of late, laid herself so open to me as perhaps she has
to

to you. Want of confidence on my part, it is likely you will urge as the cause : but, whether that allegation be just or not, the fact is the same ; consequently I am the greater stranger to her heart, and my diffidence, on that account, is the more excusable.

I have made it my business, however, to see Leland. If he be guilty, he has indeed a matchless assurance and uncommon command of temper. He denied my charge with the utmost steadiness ; and even when I mentioned Emily Bland's affair with great warmth, and (after insisting on that as sufficient of itself to justify my suspicions)

suspensions) added some reproaches, which I thought would have stung a guilty person to the quick, he only replied in a firm tone, "Miss Bland's affair, is not, Sir John, as I take it, your concern : to such as pretend a right to question me about that business, I shall make the very same answer I now give you concerning Miss Carleton : I am innocent, and ready to defend my character with the hazard of my life and fortune."

As I found there was no farther satisfaction to be obtained from this quarter, I withdrew, full of anxious thoughts

20 The Force of Nature ; or

thoughts, and determined to pay a visit to the earl of M****. This design, it is probable, I shall put in execution before I close my packet ; though I really have but little hopes of gaining any new lights from him.

What can we think of this perplexing affair ? Pray Heaven it may terminate to the honour of Charlotte, and the satisfaction of the much-embarraſſed

J. GRETTON.

LET.

LETTER XLIII.

From the same to the same.

October 11.

THAT nothing might be wanting on my part, towards the discovery of this intricate affair, I have waited on the Earl of M****. He treated me with great politeness; and I could not perceive a single circumstance in his behaviour that could warrant my suspicions of his being concerned in a plot on my niece: but he, like many others whom I have consulted, wished me to seek for Mr. Gower, as the most likely person to unravel the secret.

Perhaps

Perhaps you will still say, this Lord is one of their party : but is there not a possibility of your having been misinformed ? And if Gower actually has her, how must we proceed ? This niece of mine, I once flattered myself would have been the comfort of my declining years ; but now, alas ! she is the great cause of all my grief and anxiety. Meanwhile it is all a mystery, and till it is unravelled there is no peace for

Your afflicted friend,

J. GRETTON.

L E T-

L E T T E R XLIV.

MISS ARABELLA HALE to Sir JOHN
GRETTON.

October 13.

IT is indeed strange, Sir John, that no news can yet be got of your fair niece. My heart bleeds for that excellent lady: perhaps she feels at this time even more than our fears can prompt us to imagine; distant, very probably, from her friends, and destitute of every means of relief!

As to Leland, what are his protestations? Has he not already shewn himself to be the worst of men, and can any faith be put in him who so
basely

24 The Force of Nature ; or,
basely betrayed the too credulous
Emily ?

Is Lord M****'s concern in that
affair too so soon forgotten, and the
farce of the worthless Edmonds ?
And, after all this, would you sooner
trust them than your niece, rather
believe their innocence than that of
Mr. Gower ?

Miss Carleton's heart has of late
been more open to me than to you,
it has been easy for you to divine the
reason. I have indeed a thorough
knowledge of her principles, and it
is from that knowledge I speak. It
is but too plain, Sir John, at present,
you

you place not in her the confidence she deserves. But is it not wonderful, at such a time as this, that a moment should be lost in surmises to the prejudice of your Charlotte, and which must damp the necessary ardour in such a cause. Rather let us hasten and employ every method to restore the dear creature to our arms.

My uncle says he is sure Edmonds and David Payne must be in this plot, and is accordingly making use of the proper means to detect them. Pray Heaven he may succeed, and at once relieve the distress of Miss Carleton, and her

ARABELLA.

L E T T E R X L V .

Mr. GOWER to JAS. SELWYN, Esq;

October 14.

I Congratulate you, my dear friend,
on your intended return to your
native country : but you see the hand
of Fate has determined to separate us.
Your account* of the retirement in
the south of France corresponds to
my wishes, and I believe I shall soon
withdraw thither. It would give me
great pleasure, however, to meet you
at the little village of C——, in my
journey through that kingdom. You
are the last friend I intend to take

* Sent in a letter which does not appear in
this collection.

leave

leave of ; such as I was formerly acquainted with abroad, I must not see, lest they should find me out, and disturb me in my solitude. For this reason, I shall travel under a feigned name to the place you have mentioned, where I trust to spend my days in innocence and peace.

You chide me, my friend, for this resolution, and tell me that the social virtues are the business of man. While he can practise them, I grant they are ; neither was I willing to quit my post in life, till unable to maintain it without prejudice to myself and those with whom I was connected. Un-

23 . The Force of Nature; or,

happy, calumniated, deserted, and fatal to the peace of my friends, I resolve to withdraw from a sphere where I can no longer be useful, and endeavour to quit at once my misfortunes and my country. Yet shall I not immure myself, like a lazy monk or hermit, in a cave or cloister: no— in a calm retirement, secluded only from the busy part of mankind; where simple Nature wears her most beautiful face, I hope to spend my days in acts of piety and benevolence. Isabella's unhappiness, her sudden disappearance; my hopeless passion, and wounded reputation, all demand this sacrifice.

Mean-

Meanwhile I reside here in T——,
unknowing and unknown; my ac-
quaintance supposing me to have left
the kingdom. A few days will give
truth to their surmises, and conduct
to your presence, for the last time,
your

GOWER.

C 3

L E T-

L E T T E R XLVI.

From the same to the same.

October 17,

HOW mysterious, my friend, are the ways of Providence. Ere this I thought to have been far advanced upon my journey. — But what an unexpected event has detained me ! — Happy am I that it has pleased Heaven yet once more to make me the instrument of good to a fellow-creature in distress ; — doubly happy that I have relieved so amiable an object.

As I was proceeding on my journey on horseback, unattended, for
the

the sake of privacy, I struck off from the main road into a green lane; in the narrowest part of it I was met by a horseman very closely muffled, and holding in his arms a woman, whose mouth he endeavoured to stop. As he must necessarily pass me, before he could proceed, I placed myself directly across his way, and demanded the occasion of this struggle, and on what account he treated the companion of his journey so roughly? He replied: "She is my sister; and as
"obstinate a girl as ever existed. I
"have this moment prevented her
"from completing her own ruin."
But the lady had by this time so far

recovered her speech, as to exclaim in a tremulous tone, " I his sister ! " " O villainy ! save me, Sir, from the " monster !" It was a well-known voice that struck my ear ; and how much was I surprized, when, still struggling to get free, she pulled from her face a handkerchief which the ruffian had thrown over it, I beheld in her the dear, the lovely Charlotte. I flew to her rescue : the villain discharged a pistol at me, and the ball went through my hat : I too had fire-arms, yet durst not use them, lest I should hurt Miss Carleton ; but, closing with my desperate antagonist, just as he had drawn out a second pistol

from

from his holsters, I struck it out of his hand, and with a blow of my hanger, laid him at his horse's feet; at the same time supporting the lady with my left hand, who must otherwise necessarily have followed him to the ground; swooning as she was with fear, and shaken by the shock of his fall.

As things were circumstanced, I deemed it highly proper to take Miss Carleton on my own horse, and proceed immediately to the next inn on the London road; where necessary refreshment was procured for my fair charge, and, what she stood yet more

in need of, after her fatigues and perplexities, a few hours repose.

Meanwhile people were sent out to look after the wounded man, who returned without being able to find or hear of him. But the next day, when we set off in a post-chaise for London, (for Miss Carleton, though in a very weak state, could not be persuaded to rest any longer) we were overtaken by Mr. Sympson, who had been in pursuit of the knot of them, on account of injuries done to his daughter. This gentleman said he was informed the man I had encountered (who proves to be no other than

David

David Payne) was carried to a little alehouse two miles farther on the western road, about half an hour after the affair happened; and was secretly conveyed from thence by a countryman, but nobody could tell whither.

I am now with Miss Carleton at her guardian's; she has been much indisposed; but, thank Heaven, every day recovers more and more her health and strength. I attend her as regularly as a physician:—O Selwyn, how weak are our resolves! But what is the love of our country, and from whence does it arise, but from the
near

near and dear consideration of parents, friends, and acquaintance? — What then is our love of the world, and from whence does that arise, but from our attachment to the delights and social enjoyments we taste in it. If we lose these incitements to either, our love for either will, of consequence, lessen and subside. Let these again be set in a strong point of view, and it will burn again with equal ardour.

Yet must this bad world wear a better face before I can hope for any happiness in it: but to the Providence of the Great Disposer of all things I commit my fortunes, and submit myself

self to the guidance of his will; being well assured that whatever he orders is, “*wisest, virtuouslest, discreetest, best,*” and that resignation is the part of mortals.

I am too much perplexed in mind, and concerned at present, to prolong this epistle farther than to assure you that I still remain

Your sincere friend,

GOWER.

L E T.

L E T T E R XLVII.

Sir JOHN GRETTON to Miss A. HALE.

October 15.

HAPPILY, Miss Hale, at last the dear creature is found. Now Heaven be praised ! she is innocent ; though she has indeed been unhappy, and was at last delivered by the hands of the deserving, and as I rejoice to say, the falsely-suspected Gower. He is now with us ; and if there be a possibility of rewarding virtue like his, he shall not pass without a recompense. Poor Charlotte is still very much indisposed, and we are all in some confusion. You will therefore excuse inaccuracy in these lines from

J. GRETTON.

L E T

LETTER XLVIII.

Miss EMILY BLAND to Miss A. HALE.

October 16.

THEIR infernal schemes, my dear patroness, are at length defeated ; virtue in the end will triumph. — How justly did you suspect Leland to be concerned in this affair ! The rest was the result of Mr. Sympson's enquiries.

It was indeed a most unworthy suspicion which Sir John harboured of Mr. Gower. That generous man has already completed the subscription he set on foot for the enlargement of my father. He delights in doing good :
may

may he meet the reward he deserves, and live happy in the possession of his utmost wishes !

The whole knot of them, I find, were concerned in this last diabolical scheme; which, to their great disappointment, was so unexpectedly defeated by one whom they supposed to be at too great a distance to give them any interruption.

I have been informed that the lady Isabella Vere (of whom you gave me a short history) has been seen in the interior part of France, from whence it is supposed she intends to bend her course towards Italy. How groundless.

less was that surmise of her being gone off with Mr. Gower, or that he kept her in private!

Virtue then, my amiable friend, can no more escape infelicity than it can escape envy and detraction, and must go through many fiery trials before it comes forth pure from the assay : yet the consciousness of innocence and real worth will ever console the good in the midst of all their sufferings.—Even I (now the first storm of grief and anger has subsided in my breast) my honour sullied, and condemned to suffer for another's crime ; even I receive a nameless satisfaction
from

42 The Force of Nature ; or,

from the testimony of my own conscience in my favour.

Forgive, my dear lady, these my tedious reflexions. We are all apt to dwell on our particular misfortunes ; and surely if the unhappy have a right to complain, few can at present claim a greater than

The forsaken

EMILY.

LET

LETTER XLIX.

Miss ARABELLA HALE to Miss
CHARLOTTE CARLETON.

October 22.

TELL me, my dear Charlotte,
tell your impatient Arabel, the
particulars of your late distressful situ-
ation. I have received Sir John's let-
ter, I have heard Miss Bland's ac-
count ; but neither of them is satis-
factory ;—I must have the particulars
from you :—yet don't write, I charge
you, if you are not perfectly reco-
vered. My uncle desires to be re-
membered to you ; and I can assure
you that you are held in high esti-
mation here. The old gentleman says
you

you are an angel ; and even my aunt cannot help owning you to be a *sober, discreet young woman* ; at the same time adding, “ there are but few such “ now-a-days, the more is the pity.”

But how fares Mr. Gower after his fatigue ; and are you not all glad that you have found the lost sheep ? Ah ! Charlotte, he must be the man for you at last. Love, honour, gratitude, all point him out, and he must not go without his reward.

Lady Isabella is in France ; and Mr. Selwyn is daily expected in England : Captain Seymour too is coming hither on a visit ; and we shall come

to see you soon.—So we shall be all huddled together, like the characters in the last scene of a comedy. Take a little sketch of the picture. There will be you and your respectful lover, like two paintings in Lord T——'s gallery, perpetually looking towards each other, yet neither advancing. Then there will be captain Seymour and the lively Harriet, playing off the artillery of their wit against each other, with a sprightliness which matrimony itself will scarcely be able to tame. And there shall I be too, at cross questions with my serious admirer; as thus— “Madam, may I
“ presume?”—“Presume! a fiddle-
“ stick!

“ stick ! what would the man have?
 “ — The favour of your hand” —
 “ Well, take it---Is the creature dis-
 “ tracted ?” — If he is, you are the
 “ cause, and thus (embracing me)
 “ he shews his frenzy.” — “ Hearn’ye,
 “ old acquaintance, don’t you re-
 “ member I hate rudeness ?” — “ But
 “ my dear Arabella !” — “ Familiar
 “ enough !” — “ Then seriously, Miss
 “ Hale” — “ I tell you I will not be
 “ serious ; so be gone ! Will the man
 “ never leave teizing me ?” ---- Then,
 perhaps, he turns away discontented,
 we squabble a little, and at last I have
 the pleasure of hearing my lover beg
 pardon for my faults. To complete
 the

the picture, in the back-ground will appear the good old folks, *chirping like grasshoppers*, as Homer phrases it, and laying their heads together for the good of posterity. Laurels and palm-branches, interwoven with the green myrtle and the peaceful olive, and supported by Hymen, with a number of Loves and Graces, and fifty other such poetical fancies, encompass the piece, and finish the design.

Now, my dear, what do you think of the drawing? Is it not copied after Nature? “Aye, say you; but
“there is too great a warmth of colouring.”

Forgive

Forgive me, my amiable friend, for trifling at a time like this; but the news of your deliverance has filled my heart with joy; and I would endeavour to cheer your drooping spirits. If the virtuous are the peculiar care of heaven; if prudence be the card by which we ought to direct our course through life, it is surely distrustful Providence to suppose that you, on whom Heaven has bestowed both virtue and prudence, should be at last unhappy. Take courage then, my dear, and do not sink beneath those afflictions which were doubtless intended only as trials of your constancy, and which are now drawing
to

to an end. Believe me, the time is near at hand when you will view your past misfortunes with pleasure, and rejoice in that fortitude which carried you through them ; while you spend the happy hours with your beloved husband, or sometimes with

Your faithful

ARABELLA.
I desire the particulars of this affair ; I

will write them down as nearly as I can recollect them.

On the 27th of the last month, my uncle and Sir George being both gone

Vol. II. D LET.

inform me that the former would be glad

LETTER L.

Miss CHARLOTTE CARLETON to
Miss ARABELLA HALE,

October 24.

ONCE more, my dear Arabel,
your Charlotte writes to you
from the hospitable roof of her re-
lations, after an absence which was
likely to have cost her her life.—You
desire the particulars of this affair ; I
will write them down as nearly as I
can recollect them.

On the 27th of the last month, my
uncle and Sir George being both gone
abroad, a livery-servant was sent to
inform me that the former would be
glad

glad to speak with me at one Mr. Saunders's, who lived in the neighbourhood, and whose chair, as I was made to believe, attended me. As I knew the livery, and remembered the face of the servant, I made no scruple of attending the summons. It was then dusk ;—I got into the chair, and drew the curtains ; and found myself carried forward so briskly, that very few minutes must have brought me to Mr. Saunders's. But perceiving this was not the case, I drew back the curtains, and called out to the chairmen to stop : yet they continued their pace, and, before I could make myself heard or regarded by any one,

I perceived myself in the fields, where they set me down, and stopping my mouth, and blinding my eyes, which I had fixed on the distant glimmering of the lamps at the extremity of London, they conveyed me into a post-chaise, which drove most furiously. I was seated by the side of a man, whom by his voice I soon discovered to be the detested Leland, and who talked much to me of love, but whose behaviour was very indecent. Often did I shriek out violently, and as often did he stop my mouth; till, quite tired and spent, at last I sunk down in the bottom of the chaise, which, about five in the morning, set
us

us down at a country house, into which I was carried, terrified and astonished, faintly struggling, and rather dead than alive. Here I asked the ravisher, in as firm a tone as I was able, what he meant by this ruffian-like usage, and what he intended to do with me? "That question," said he "is premature at present;—you shall know soon:—but, in the mean time, I would advise you to take some refreshment." And so saying he quitted the room. I fell into a fainting-fit, in which I was carried to a chamber, where, on my recovery, I found myself attended by a young woman whom Leland called

cousin, who endeavoured to sooth me, and prevailed on me to swallow a glass of wine. After her departure, I composed myself to rest, as well as I could, having first secured the door, to prevent a surprise.

When I awaked, I began to reflect very deeply on my present disagreeable circumstances. The chamber door, which I had locked within, I found was also made fast without, and no possibility of escape. I considered myself as in the very jaws of the lion, and ready to be devoured:—my fate, however, was as yet uncertain; and nothing farther had been offered,

offered, on his part, to offend me, my confinement only excepted. Nay, Leland even went to London, where, as I have since heard, my uncle had a conference with him, and where his presence served as a blind.

Four days passed thus, during all which time my female attendant suffered me to want for nothing but my liberty : but on the fifth, Leland returned, and the plot began to open upon me. He sent for me down into the parlour, insisting I should dine with him : this I at first refused ; but knowing how absolutely I was in his power, I at length complied with his repeated solicitations, though I could

scarcely eat any thing, and sat silent and melancholy all the while.

When the cloth was removed, he began to discourse concerning my behaviour. "I am surprized, madam," said he, "to see you assume such a gloomy aspect. Am I so deformed as to affright you? Or why is your cheek now pale with fear, now red with glowing anger? You sigh, you are silent. Is there a wish you have formed, and I have it in my power to gratify? Name it, and enjoy it."—"My liberty".—"And will you not immediately use it to fly from me?"—"To the utmost verge

“ verge of earth, to escape such per-
“ secution,” said I “ lest I, like the
“ poor, undone Miss Bland, should
“ mourn too late my peace and ho-
“ nour lost.”—“ Emily Bland,” re-
turned he “ is a forward strumpet,
“ and has a great share of impudence
“ to make so free with my character
“ as I find she does. But let me im-
“ plore you, O fair disposer of my
“ fate! to regard with a favourable
“ eye my sincere and ardent passion.”

He would have gone on with much more of this, but that, unable to endure such mockery, I began to treat him with a just disdain and resentment, and leaving him, seemingly

58 The Force of Nature; or,

much disappointed, withdrew to my chamber.

But I have (doubtless) already tired you with the length of this epistle; I will therefore reserve the remainder of my story till another opportunity, and employ the present time in assuring you how sincerely I am,

Your ever affectionate

CHARLOTTE.

L E T.

LETTER LI.

MISS CARLETON in Continuation.

I WILL now, my dear Arabel, resume the thread of my tedious narration, if you have at least more patience to read it, than I had to undergo the sufferings I am about to relate.

Two days elapsed before Mr. Leland ventured again to see me, after his repulse. I spent the intermediate time in casting about, as before, for means to escape. At length I thought I had hit on a method, which was that of fastening the sheets and some other things to the frame of a small closet

closet window that they had forgot to secure, and from thence to descend into the garden, and climb over the wall where it was lowest, and somewhat out of repair. But before this scheme was ripe for execution, Leland sent for me again into the parlour. Encouraged by the hopes my design had inspired me with, I suffered myself to be prevailed on, and assumed as chearful an air as I could, on account of not raising any suspicion in him of my intent. But this I found no easy matter ; for he began upon the old subject, and perceiving that I heard him with more patience than before, he presumed on my kindness,

ness, as he termed it, to torment me with his odious familiarities. [To what a dreadful state is a woman reduced, my Arabella, who fears to resent such rudeness, lest worse should follow! yet such was my unhappy case.] At last, however, I got rid of his company for that evening; and not being interrupted all the next day, by night I had brought my scheme to bear, and about twelve o'clock descended, with some difficulty, into the garden. I then made all the haste I could towards the wall; but, in my hurry, fell down a flight of steps, which led from the terrass, with such violence, that I not a little discomposed myself,

myself, and at the same time threw down two flower-pots, which broke in several pieces. The noise alarmed Mr. Leland's pretended cousin, and I heard her window open. Rising, therefore, as well as I could, I ran with all speed towards the extremity of the garden, and (my fears increasing my strength) mounted the wall, but unluckily, instead of the ruined part of it, I found too late that I had climbed it where it was highest; and there was a broad and deep ditch on the other side. I started at the sight; but seeing my pursuer at my heels, I should certainly have thrown myself down, had he not mounted quick enough

enough to prevent me, and, catching me in his arms, carried me back, with the help of his female attendant. My tormentor now loaded me with reproaches; I swooned away, and was in that condition conveyed to my chamber. The next day, Leland sent again for me; but I absolutely refused to attend him. The same evening, without any ceremony, he forced the door of my chamber, and, seizing me, "You shall now pay me, Charlotte," said he, "for all the trouble you have given me." I broke from him, and perceiving he stood between me and the door, fell on my knees at his feet, conjuring him to take

take pity on my sex and helpless condition. "Look you, madam," said he, "it is now your turn to petition, "and mine to refuse.—To cut the "matter short with you; you must "consent instantly to be made my "wife (for which purpose I have a "parson ready) or, by heavens I will "avail myself of the advantage I have "over you, and possess you by force." So saying, he seized my hand, and ringing a bell, ordered a man-servant, who attended the summons, to desire that Mr. Grime would walk in. Mr. Grime entered accordingly; but his very countenance was sufficient to fright any one. He was a tall rough-hewn

hewn man, and had a look that rather would have bespoke him a hangman than a clergyman. His robes by no means seemed adapted to his misshapen body. You may easily conceive I started with horror at this proposal. I detested Leland; and were it possible for me to have forgot my hatred of him, I should have remembered Emily too well to have fallen into the same snare that drew on her ruin.

— “What can be your objection to
“to this marriage?” said Grime.

“Two,” returned I, “the bridegroom
“and the parson; and I will sooner
“die,

“ die, than give the disposal of my
 “ hand to the one, or plight my vows
 “ to the other. Even now, I am fully
 “ persuaded of my deliverance, and
 “ am determined to resist to the last
 “ your infamous designs on my person
 “ and fortune.” Grime was so stung
 with this reply, that he looked twice
 as ugly as before, and cried out,—
 “ Proceed, then, Mr. Leland; Hea-
 “ ven and man authorize you to pro-
 “ ceed.” “ Wretch !” I exclaimed,
 “ dost thou dare to profane the name
 “ of Heaven—dost thou?—” Here
 he cut short my speech, and taking
 me in his arms (for he was twice as
 strong as Leland) “ There,” said he,
 throw-

throwing me into his lap, as he sat on the bedside, "take her, remember she
"is your wife, all but the ceremony,
"and proceed accordingly." He then
quitted the room, and left me struggling with Leland on the bed. I soon
found the contest vain; and the villain
was just on the point of completing
his purpose, when Grime re-entered
the room, insisting to speak with him
directly. The other cursed him for
the unreasonable interruption: how-
ever he vouchsafed him a hearing, and
left me in a fainting fit on the ground.
When I recovered, I found myself hur-
ried away through the garden-gate,
and put on a horse, in the arms of this
very

very man who before had acted as a chaplain, but was now no longer dressed in his canonicals. After we had proceeded about two miles, with great expedition, Mr. Gower met us; the event of which meeting you know.— I was delivered by his unexampled bravery, and the reverend Mr. Grime now proved to be no other than David Payne, so infamous for his attachment to that knot of villains. . . What is since become of Leland, or his cousin, I know not; but the house was Ramble's, who is since fled; and this is the very place where Miss Sympson was first confined, but removed on my approach; for the place has served

occasionally for the schemes of the whole junto. Soon after her unexpected delivery by her father, that gentleman came down, in order to make a search after her seducers, and notice being given to Leland, who succeeded him in the wicked house, he immediately removed me, purposing to convey me, no doubt, to some other place of infamy, when Heaven sent Mr. Gower to favour my escape.

Thus, Arabella, ends my story: the hero is still with us; but quite altered from what he was; such a gloom hangs on his brow, as makes us all uneasy. There are various conjectures

70 The Force of Nature; or, T

jectures formed, as to the cause of it, in our family; but it seems most likely to be occasioned by that love-affair between him and the Lady Isabella Vere, of which I have formerly heard so much.—But is it consistent, my dear, with this man's boasted virtue, thus to slight a woman who loves him, and whom gratitude alone should be sufficient to engage him to. Yet this consideration perhaps it is that makes him so uneasy. Be that as it may, I never must entertain a thought of him as a lover.

What a strange picture, my dear, has your lively imagination presented

us

us of a company of lovers ! Two of them indeed will never meet. But are you not too apt to practise in earnest what you have written in jest ? Surely Mr. Selwyn deserves better treatment. You are an unaccountable trifler ; but I must not be angry, since you do it to divert me. Courage, my dear ! you are in no danger this time, I believe, of losing your

CHARLOTTE.

L E T.

LETTER LII.

JAS. SELWYN, Esq; to Mr. GOWER.

October 25.

IT is plain then, my friend, that Heaven never meant you to spend your days in solitude. You complained that, by a strange sort of fatality, you were ever hurtful to those whom you intended to serve. How effectually is this opinion now refuted! and where could you have done a more acceptable, a more worthy piece of service than that which the extraordinary accident you have related threw in your way? Reflect but a moment, what might have befallen Miss Carleton, had

had not Providence, at that critical juncture, sent you to her assistance; I may hope therefore that you will weigh the matter well, before you retire from that post in life which Providence itself seems to have allotted you.

Mrs. Arden, I find, has once again shifted her quarters, and is set out for England. Beware of her, as you know she is a vile woman, and implacable in her resentments. Surely no scruples of conscience, on her account, can disturb your repose:—you have done more for her than even the strictest rules of honour could require.

Instead of your seeing me here, I hope to see you, my Gower, and not for the *last time*, in our own native country. Hereafter, perhaps, we may draw from past afflictions useful lessons of prudence and morality.

My affairs in England wear a more promising aspect than they did sometime since ; and I am not without hopes of possessing the greatest happiness that my most sanguine wishes ever aspired to. My Arabella, my dearest Arabella, may yet be mine ! Possessed of her, and settled in my native country, how great will be my felicity !

You

You too may be happy.—Think on your present situation ; reflect on your capacity of being serviceable to society ; consider your friend, and lastly think on your Charlotte, who certainly is designed as a recompence for all your sufferings ; and, at least, await in London the arrival of

Your faithful

SELWYN.

E 2

L E T

no 2111 LETTER LIII. 107

Lady ISABELLA VERE to Dr. BERTIE.

October 16.

NO answer yet, my dear tutor ?

What shall I think of your silence ? If you have not been able to get the accounts I desired, you might, at least, have wrote to me.

Be not scrupulous, I conjure you, of discovering to me the secret, although the circumstances attending it should be never so disagreeable. Believe me, none can be more fully convinced than I am of the futility of all pretensions to greatness, founded on illustrious descent alone. I need not dwell

dwell on this ; since you, who have had the formation of my mind, ought to be acquainted with its principles.

But this unhappy passion, that has so long possessed my heart, seems at once to have deprived my mind of its delicacy, and to have disordered its frame, and wrought an alteration in its natural temper.—I am eager, impatient, and full of disturbed thoughts, whilst I yet behold with sorrow an alteration which my better reason daily reproaches me for. Your advice, your consolation, I am highly in need of ; and sincerely do I wish for your presence, though you are only separated from me to do me good.

Though I am concealed here to my wish ; yet, owing to a certain restless disposition, the general companion of care and sorrow, I wish to change my place ; and if I should not hear from you by the beginning of next month, it is in France that you may expect to meet

ISABELLA VERE.

LET-

LETTER LIV.

From the same to the same.

November 3.

I HAVE kept my resolution, and here am I arrived at Calais. The winds and seas were in a violent commotion during our passage, but my mind was still more so; and I am as much as ever to learn what progress you have made in my affairs; yet, perhaps, when I know, I shall be more unhappy.

Miss Carleton, I find, has been forced away from her friends by one Leland, and delivered by my excellent Gower. In consequence of this, he

has emerged from an obscure retreat, laid aside a design he had formed of going abroad, and is now more strongly attached to the Arnold family than ever. Cruel, unfeeling, lovely man ! — Yet why should I blame him ? Is his choice not free ? Has he ever made any professions to me ? — Yes, of *gratitude* he has, but not one word of *love*. Yet this very *love*, which he sought not to inspire, have I harboured in my breast. Hence am I unhappy, hence these incessant sorrows : — but I hasten to hide myself at once from him and from the world, and to lose (if possible) the remembrance of my love and of my former self.

self. Come hither to me, my dear Dr. Bertie, and bring with you every argument that wisdom, that religion and virtue can dictate, to quench in my breast this destructive, hopeless passion. Come, and once more restore peace to my heart. Believe me, never was your presence more necessary than it is at this time to your

ISABELLA.

E 5

LET.

LETTER LV.

Dr. BERTIE to Lady ISABELLA
VERE.

November 13.

I WAS much chagrined, my dear lady, to find by the perusal of your last, which was sent after me to England, that my letter of the 22d of October never came to your hands. I therein acquainted you that the earl of P——'s kinsman, who now enjoys his estate and titles, had quitted France before I could reach V——, and returned to London, whither I determined to follow him. But since my arrival in this city, I have heard that he is gone into Devonshire upon business.

business. I wait his return, which is expected in a few days, as my business is of too delicate a nature to be transacted by letter.

In the mean time, by accident, I fell into company with the lord viscount Sommers, who was formerly a friend to our family, and had known me in my youthful days. Having heard much of your ladyship, he entered into a conversation concerning you, in the course of which I learned that your character had suffered much from the false opinion the world entertained of your connexions with Mr. Gower. He acknowledged that gentleman to be his nephew: "But," said

saïd he, “ my brother disobliged me
“ so highly, by marrying beneath the
“ dignity of our family, that I never
“ after would look upon him or his.
“ When this my nephew was three
“ years old, his father went abroad,
“ whither Mrs. Gower followed him.
“ He was killed in a duel, and she
“ died in childbed :— meanwhile my
“ kinsman remained under the guar-
“ dianship of a tradesman nearly re-
“ lated to his mother ; but this man’s
“ affairs, in process of time, proving
“ greatly embarrassed, he consigned
“ his charge to others, and, making
“ a just dividend to his ward of what
“ little belonged to him, failed to the
Indies.

“ Indies. Young Gower was said to
“ be, very early in life, a debauchee
“ and a hypocrite : you know, Sir,
“ what has been alledged against him,
“ especially with relation to the lady
“ Isabella. Were it not for these
“ reasons, I might still have been
“ brought to acknowledge him, and
“ especially at a time when I expect
“ every day to hear that Heaven has
“ deprived me of a son.”

A long conversation ensued, in the
course of which I took great pains to
vindicate both your ladyship and Mr.
Gower from the aspersions thrown on
your respective characters. In the end,
his

his lordship resolved to see his nephew. " And if I find things circumstanced as you have represented them, Dr. Bertie," said he, " I will take my kinsman into favour, on condition that he marries the lady Isabella."

However disagreeable the terms of the obligation might be to that gentleman, or how much soever they might be supposed to offend your ladyship's delicacy, I easily perceived this was no time and place to argue the matter ; therefore I only advised him to be gentle in enforcing his commands. " Leave that to me,"
replied

replied the peer: "I doubt not but
" I shall bring my kinsman to yield
" a chearful obedience to my will,
" if he be the person you repre-
" sent him." But here some com-
pany coming in, put an end to the
conversation.

In a day or two I am to see his
lordship again, and wait the event
with some impatience; since I hope
I shall then be enabled to write some-
thing that may contribute to your la-
dyship's felicity. Often by such ac-
cidents does Heaven bring to pass
things the most extraordinary and un-
expected. May that which I have
related above prove the happy means
of

88 The Force of Nature; or,

of uniting you with your deserving
Gower!

I forbear comments till I shall see
the result of this affair. Meanwhile
no time is lost; since, as I before ob-
served, I am in waiting here for the
young earl of P——. But I chose
to commit these particulars to paper,
lest they should escape my memory.
In a short time you will hear farther
from

Your devoted

J. BERTIE.

L E T-

LETTER LVI.

From the same to the same.

November 16.

THE Kinsmen have met, and I have the pleasure to inform your ladyship that Mr. Gower was very cordially received by his uncle. Whenever you were the subject of their discourse, he treated you with the utmost tenderness: however, the peer did not urge him, as I expected, on the subject of marriage. A circumstance, trifling in itself, occasioned them to renew their conversation about you:—Mr. Gower's shirt-bosom falling open, discovered the miniature pic-

picture of a lady. His lordship asking whose the portrait was, his kinsman declared it to be yours, at which the nobleman seemed highly pleased; and, looking on it with attention, "So, I find," said he, smiling, "you wear her next your heart after all." "And ever shall," replied Mr. Gower, sighing. His uncle's attention was, at that instant, called another way, or it is probable that the discourse would have taken a very serious turn.

It is said that Miss Carleton and all the Arnold family intend shortly to return into the country. The sister of Sir George is somewhat indisposed; and

and it is imagined they wait only for her recovery, to set out on their proposed journey.

As I see no likelihood of any thing else occurring worth notice, till the arrival of lord P——, I shall close my packet with assuring you that I remain, Madam,

Your ladyship's faithful servant,

J. BERTIE.

L E T,

L E T T E R L V I I .

Mr. GOWER to JAS. SELWYN, Esq;

November 13.

SORRY am I, my dear friend,
 that your business still detains you
 in France, whither you so kindly dis-
 suade me from coming. I am treated
 here with the greatest respect; and if
 my circumstances were not peculiarly
 unhappy, I should have many oppor-
 tunities of addressing myself to Miss
 Carleton; yet, situated as I am, how
 can I presume to do it?

First let me sooth, if possible, the
 gentle Isabella. Let me check the
 violence of my tormentor, Arden:
 let

let me break the combined knot of enemies that threaten me and my Charlotte with ruin : and, above all, let me clear my character from the malicious aspersions cast on it, and endeavour to fall on some method whereby to place myself in such a light as may render me a shelter and support to her I love, and to the rest of my friends.

Till all this shall be accomplished, there is no peace for me. And all this I must endeavour to bring about, if I remain in England, or entertain the most distant hopes of possessing my Charlotte. This will be an arduous

duous task indeed : tell me, my Selwyn, do you think it impossible ?

Already, you see, I am become a man of the world again ; so frail is our nature, so weak are our resolutions !—But I must drop my pen :—Dr. Bertie desires to speak with me ; it is long since I have seen the good man. In my next you shall hear what is his business with your

GOWER.

L E T.

LETTER LVIII.

From the same to the same.

November 16.

AMIRACLE, my dear Selwyn! Dr. Bertie came to invite me to a conference with my uncle, the Lord Sommers, whom I have not seen since I was an infant. This is what I could never have expected, considering the family-difference between him and my father, which occasioned them not to see or converse with each other for three years, and the bad character which I have great reason to believe his lordship has received of me. Yet this business, difficult as it was to accomplish, has the good clergyman effected.

He

He received me very courteously, and we fell into a conversation, the particulars of which I have here set down, as nearly as I can recollect them †.

* * * * *

I endeavoured to clear my conduct before the peer ; but found that had been in a great measure done for me by Dr. Eertie. At parting, my uncle presented me with a diamond ring, which he desired me to wear for his

† Here follows a repetition of what we have already recited in Letter LVI.

fake ;

fake ; and I should have departed highly satisfied with our conversation, but for the hints he dropped concerning the lady Isabella.

My uncle is much taken with that lady. I fear he will urge me to an union, that cannot fail to prove in some measure unhappy, since I shall not have an heart to give to so deserving a person.

For notwithstanding I have not ever entertained the least notion of Isabella as a wife, and though my heart would disapprove of such a match ; yet were I not in love with

Charlotte, even to madness ; nay, did I not suppose that the fair-one entertained a mutual passion for me in her breast, I believe I should soon yield myself the conquest of her love, and leave the rest to her tenderness and prudence to accomplish.

But as things are circumstanced, could I gain such a painful victory, I dread the consequences of it. Heaven direct me for the best ! But I fear to come to an explanation with my uncle. If he should be explicit with me on this head, and enjoin me to marry Isabella, I shall be indeed unhappy.

I am

I am frequently favoured here with Dr. Bertie's company ; but he generally touches this affair very lightly, and though formerly so communicative in his letters, he seems now to grow every day more and more reserved in his behaviour. In short, at present, all is perplexity with your

GOWER.

LETTER LIX.

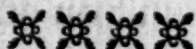
From the same to the same.

November 22.

A GAIN I have seen lord Sommers ; but I cannot say that our conversation was altogether so pleasing to me as before. Too plainly has he let me understand that my joining myself to the lady Isabella must be the price of his favour : and I could not help shewing my displeasure at it to Dr. Bertie, when we were alone together, and urging my reasons for declining the match. “ It “ is unhappy, wondrous unhappy,” said he, “ that you should be thus “ situated, still more unfortunate if “ the

“ the lady whom you affect has not a
“ mutual passion for you.” I was
not inclined to deliver my opinion of
the secret movements of my Char-
lotte’s heart, neither had I any right
so to do. I therefore made no ab-
solute answer to this indirect question,
and the discourse insensibly turned
on the rescue of Miss Carleton and
Miss Sympson, from Leland, Ramble,
and their accomplices.

I am now so critically situated, that
something must be done, and speedily,
which may determine me how to act.
O Selwyn ! my heart vibrates within
me, as at the eve of some great event.
May it prove an happy one !



November 25.

Three days have elapsed, as you see, before I could be able to close this packet ; and I now do it in great perplexity. Urged by the critical situation of my affairs, I ventured to make something like a declaration of love to Miss Carleton. At first, she fain would have seemed not to understand me ; but, on my unfolding myself in a more explicit manner, “ Mr. Gower,” said she “ is a person for whom I have ever entertained a great respect, and to whom I owe an high obligation ; but he must excuse me when I tell him that the weighty affair he mentions depends,

in

“ in a great measure, on the consent
“ of my guardians ; and even if that
“ were obtained, I could not think
“ of being united with him, while
“ there is another person in the world
“ who has a claim much more just
“ to his affections.” — “ And who,”
said I, somewhat confused “ is that
“ person ?” — “ Whose picture do
“ you wear in your bosom ?” re-
turned she briskly. “ Behold,” said
I, taking the miniature from my
breast, “ the portrait of the lovely,
“ much-esteemed, unhappy lady Isa-
“ bella ! Think not, but I feel for
“ her ; yet never did I profess a pas-
“ sion for her, nor can I wed her

“ without rendering us both equally
 “ miserable. Yet since you have
 “ mentioned her, deign but to hear
 “ me recite her story, and yourself
 “ shall confess that I am blameless in
 “ the whole affair.” Struck with the
 bold sincerity of my reply, Miss
 Carleton blushed excessively, apolo-
 gized for having thus enquired into
 my private affairs, and was about to
 withdraw, but that I insisted on her
 staying to hear my recital.

† Often did I perceive the tender
 creature ready to burst into tears for
 the fate of Isabella, and with difficul-
 ty suppressing the frequent sighs that
 heaved

heaved involuntary from her beauteous bosom. O Selwyn ! how amiable did this compassion render her in my eyes :—methought she then appeared an hundred times more lovely than ever.

When I had finished the narration, “ After all,” said Miss Carleton, “ if “ the lady be such as you speak her, “ what but a point of false delicacy “ can still prevent your being united ?” —“ Ah ! Madam, can you ask me “ that, and ask it now, even whilst “ I am pouring out my soul before “ you, and breathing forth the ardour of my passion for you, the

106 The Force of Nature; or,

“ most accomplished of your sex ?

“ Indeed had I never beheld *you*---

“ And I would to Heaven you never

“ had,” interrupted she, “ if any

“ consideration of me can tempt you,

“ who have such just notions of vir-

“ tue and propriety, to swerve from

“ either. What if I own that I es-

“ teem and regard you ? little would

“ it avail to either of us ; for though

“ my affections were fixed on you, I

“ would resign you to her who so

“ highly merits you. Preserve then my

“ esteem by an act of generosity to Isa-

“ bella, and be not outdone in virtue

“ by a woman.” We had much con-

versation of this kind, and she sup-

ported

ported her part of it with an energy superior to my expectations. At length she solemnly vowed never to listen to my addresses, while there was even a possibility of my becoming the husband of Isabella. Comfort me, my friend ! for this last blow has fallen heavy indeed, and much do I need consolation.

Captain Seymour is arrived here: it is strange where he has hid himself. He did not seem *surprized* when he was informed of Ramble's baseness, though he expressed the highest detestation of his proceedings. He has renewed his addresses to Miss Harriet.

The

The Arnold family seem to have forgotten already their warmth of friendship, and treat me with a distant respect. They talk of going down into the country again ;—then will my Charlotte again be ravished from my sight, then shall I be indeed unhappy. Adieu ! Believe that I am now, as ever, with real regard and friendly affection,

Your ever faithful

GOWER."

L E T-

LETTER LX.

Miss ARABELLA HALE to Miss
CHARLOTTE CARLETON.

November 6.

A HERO indeed, my dear, is your lover, such an one as you will not find every day. But what, in the name of wonder, possesses you, you perverse creature, to be thus busied in raising up difficulties, even before you are asked the question.—“Lady Isabella Vere.”—Fiddle of Lady Isabella Vere! My Charlotte deserves him better than fifty Isabellas. But seriously, though I heartily pity that lady, is it reasonable that Mr. Gower,

Gower, who never made any professions of love to her, should, for her sake, be debarred from seeking the affections of any other woman. But you still hint that he must, at least, have tried some means to win her affections, before a flame so violent could have kindled itself in her bosom. With *you*, I firmly believe, this maxim would hold good ; but you should consider that all are not like you. I might compliment on this head ; but I rather chuse to give a different turn to my observation, and to tell you, my serious friend, that till you get rid of some of these delicacies, positively, you will never be married.

Besides,

Besides, is it not high time for Miss Carleton to look out for a protector? You have often said you admire *my* Selwyn: now I must tell you that he is most strongly attached to *your* Gower, whom he declares to be the noblest fellow breathing.

Your behaviour, my dear, under your sufferings was prudent, was admirable; but keep your hero, though you should part with some of your double-refined delicacies, on pain of incurring the displeasure of your

ARABELLA.

L E T.

LETTER LXI.

From the same to the same.

November 28,

YOUR treatment of Mr Gower, my dear, as mentioned in your last*, has really very much displeased me.—Is there not an extreme in delicacy itself? And if any ill should betide to the worthy man, in consequence of your behaviour to him, how could you acquit yourself? Be not angry with me for speaking thus freely:—I know you will not;—it is the privilege of a friend. I am well acquainted with your good in-

* Dated November 26, and containing a repetition of what we have already related.

tentions

tentions and the uprightness of your heart ; yet I wish you would be more attentive to your own happiness. But let us reason the matter a little.

Mr. Gower, it is well known, has his delicacies as well as you, and although rejected by Miss Carleton, it is by no means certain that he will give his hand to lady Isabella ; and then what end will your self-denial (for such it certainly is) be likely to answer ? It will only contribute to destroy the happiness of your lover, without adding one jot to hers whom you compassionate. I might insist strongly on the return of gratitude
which

which you owe to Mr. Gower, for your honour, and perhaps your life, preserved; but that I know the sum of your answer will be, “that you shew your gratitude by seeking to promote his honour and happiness, and, having followed the dictates of your conscience, must stand acquitted in your own sight, and that of Heaven.”

Now all this I believe; yet as we are all fallible, and liable to mistake, I sincerely wish you may not have cause to repent this method of acting; for I have a strange foreboding in my mind, that tells me all is not right in
the

the affair of Isabella. That lady herself has said, as I am informed, that, well as she loves Mr. Gower, an unaccountable dread sometimes hangs over her while in his company; and this corresponds to what he has declared concerning the feelings of his own heart. Perhaps in this I shall be thought superstitious: be that as it may, I have taken the liberty of saying thus much, to warn my Charlotte to pay some regard to her own happiness, which is so dear to

Her faithful

ARABELLA.

L E T-

L E T T E R LXII.

Mrs. ARDEN to R. LELAND. Esq;

December 3.

I HAVE not been at rest since that cursed accident of last month so unexpectedly defeated your design on Charlotte Carleton. What a pity it was that you did not force her while she was in your power! Had I been there, I dare engage, I should have given you such wholesome counsels, as, properly attended to, would have been the sure means of preventing the fair prude from escaping with her virginity. But it is now vain to talk of past mistakes:—let us look to the
the

the future. I think I have yet a plan in my head, that may gratify at once your desires and your revenge. I will not communicate, lest your eagerness should spoil it; only be ruled by me, and, like an able general, I will, though late, retrieve the glories of the day.

By some intercepted letters, and other information, I find that Gower's uncle, the lord Sommers has been prevailed on to take him into favour, and ardently wishes to see him married to Isabella; her ambassador, Dr. Bertie, urges him on the same head; while the prudish Charlotte has actually

ally refused the offer of his hand, and is gone with the Arnold family into the country. On these circumstances will I build your rival's ruin. Promote, by your emissaries, this match, and leave the rest to me.

Notwithstanding Gower's inclinations have ever pointed towards Charlotte, yet deserted by her, and urged as he is on all hands, there is little doubt but that he may be brought to accept of Isabella.

Lord Sommers is likely to lose his son, who lies dangerously ill in Holland; if he dies, the estate and titles de-

descend to his nephew : but his lordship is possessed of a prodigious sum of money, and an immense quantity of rich plate, jewels, &c. which he can leave to whom he pleases.

I hear that Gower congratulates himself, in the midst of all his troubles, that he is no longer teized with my letters.—Vain man ;—but he shall feel my vengeance when he least expects it. Things most unlikely *may* happen. Lord M**** *may* forget the affronts he has received from Gower ; Ramble *may* turn a convert to what Seymour calls virtue ; even you, in time, *may* relent, or be tired out with
disap-

120 The Force of Nature ; or,

disappointments. All this, (though very improbable) *may* happen ; but I can never forget my resentments : never shall his flight of her person, and proud rejection of her proffered hand, and the mean arts which he used to dispose of her to another, under the stale pretence of doing her service, be forgiven by

MARGARET ARDEN.

L E T.

LETTER LXIII.

DAVID PAYNE to R. LELAND, Esq;

November 30.

AFTER what has happened, and your carelessness what became of me, when in the utmost danger and distress, I wonder how you can have the face to solicit me again to engage in your cause. By Heaven, I believe I shall never be the man I was ;— indeed, had it not been for the friendly offices of a farmer, to whom I had once done a good turn, (the only virtuous action I can recollect of my own these many years) I might have died for meer loss of blood.

You say, his lordship would have me make particular enquiries concerning lady Isabella Vere, who is expected to arrive shortly in England. Situated as I am, and obliged to play at hide and seek, how can I be supposed to be in a capacity of complying with his desires, and getting the information he wants. And, besides, pray what satisfaction am I to expect, unless it be such as I have already experienced a specimen of? For you are all backward enough in supplying me with money.

Indeed, both the earl and yourself, Mr. Leland, would do well, at least,
to

to reward me for *old* services, before you think of putting me upon *new*. But the man who becomes the tool of those above him, generally serves for a screen to keep them from being exposed; and if he happens to miss of success, then he is thrown by, and may seek his fortunes where he can find them.

On the whole, as I am apt to imagine this to be the case, the only way to convince me of the contrary, will be to support me for *what I have already done*, on which condition alone you can reasonably expect to be benefited by what *I shall do*. I am firmly

G 2

resolved

124 The Force of Nature; or,

resolved to act no more with a halter
about my neck, unless I can also have
a purse of money in my hand.

Till these preliminaries are settled,
I shall proceed no farther in your af-
fairs; and if you are unwilling to
comply with them, you must expect
no farther services from

DAVID PAYNE.

L E T

LETTER LXIV.

ROBERT LELAND, Esq; to the Earl
of M****.

December 5.

SO, my lord, we have made but a poor hand of it at last. Curse on my aukward delays ! Thus have I fairly run down the game, and then suffered another to take it up.

I inclose to your lordship two letters, the one from Mrs. Arden, and the other from David Payne ; but the style of them is very different. What a wide distinction is there between an hireling in iniquity, and one who acts from principles of pure revenge !—

That woman is indeed the life of the cause; but she is very peremptory, and has a great share of vanity. I never loved this blind-man's buff; nor can I tell what to make of David's fauciness: but I submit all to your lordship's consideration. I fancy Edmonds is gone abroad to seek new adventures. Thus do we colonize and disperse ourselves, to spread and propagate *the good old cause*.

I find captain Seymour has again made his appearance, and is likely to win Harriet Arnold. His friend Ramble's case is quite different; and it is probable, by the time that the former

is prepared for his wedding, the latter may be ready for his burial. While Sympfon and the whole country were up in arms in pursuit of us, Ramble quitted the post I had assigned him, at a little house in the neighbourhood, and, struck with a panic, rode towards another part of the country, at such a d—l of a rate, that he killed his horse, and over-heated himself so much that a violent fever was the consequence, which is likely to carry him off.

“ Such,” say the preachers, “ is
“ the fate of *iniquity* ;” but I say, such
is the fate of *folly* ; for while Ram-

ble

ble was riding himself to death, I lay secure in a cottage, waiting till the heat of the chace was over.

But to return to the subject of Mrs. Arden's letter. I cannot conceive, my lord, how Mr. Gower's marriage with the lady Isabella can effect the great purposes she talks of. If the lord Sommers takes him into favour, and, on that account, leaves him his ample fortune, it may greatly contribute to his happiness, while time, absence, and the assiduity of his wife to please him, may at length make him forget Charlotte Carleton. But all this is only puzzling in the dark ; for
I find

I find I am not to be let into the secret. It is possible, however, your lordship's penetration may enable you to unravel it.

Farewel, my lord, I shall leave all to you ; since your character stands fairer than mine in the world at present. Indeed I do not much care for appearing in public of late ; and it will be a long time before you will see in town

Your old friend,

LELAND.

G 5

L E T.

L E T T E R LXV.

The Earl of M**** to ROBERT
LELAND, Esq;

December 28.

YOURS, together with the inclosed letters, I received, and have considered them with attention. Mrs. Arden has certainly laid her scheme more deeply than you imagine, and is not, perhaps, to be censured so severely for her conduct in regard to the secrecy she affects.— Letters may be intercepted ; and we have often seen that too many medlers spoil a plot. I have a notion, however, from some hints which have been dropped, that I am not entirely
-to

to seek in this affair. If it be what I suspect, you will never hit on it, and perhaps it were better you did not.

As to David Payne, we must endeavour to stop his muttering, not so much for the hope of any *future service* he may do us, as in hopes to prevent any *present injury*.

What a whiner is that Seymour become! Plague on these proselytes! They are always zealots. But as this military man does not obstruct us at present, we need not trouble ourselves about him. Poor Ramble! I am sorry for him; but we must all go some time or other.

You

You will have little to do, if I guess aright, in this scheme of Margaret's ; though, to do you justice, you are always so ready to support the cause, that no one would suspect you for *an hireling in iniquity*. Yet take care of yourself, and remember the day may come, when you may again be useful to yourself and us. Adieu.

M****.

L E T.

LETTER LXVI.

Dr. BERTIE to Lady ISABELLA VERE.

December 6.

AT last, my dear lady, to my unspeakable satisfaction, I have received orders to use my utmost endeavours to recal you to England, and to set on foot a treaty of marriage between you and him you most value on earth.

I am well aware that a business so abrupt suits not with your delicacy. Though Mr. Gower himself desires your presence, yet you will, perhaps, be more ready to attribute it to his complaisance to his uncle, than his
love

love for you. But this question cannot now be resolved, and I am no adept in these love-affairs. Yet I will do all in my power to serve my dear child, (permit the fond name) and to promote her happiness.

Mr. Gower has ever professed that he valued and highly esteemed you: who knows whether your presence may not, now Miss Carleton is withdrawn, ripen that esteem into love? That excellent lady has written to Mr. Gower, conjuring him to accept your hand, in terms the most forcible that can be conceived.

Hasten then, dear lady, and complete the work so happily begun,
and

and which promises to make you happy in the possession of your wishes.

The Earl of P—— is unexpectedly delayed in his return to town by family-affairs, and I have been so much taken up about the business concerning which I write, that I have scarcely had an hour to spare for any thing else. Adieu ! Madam ; — believe me to be

Your ladyship's devoted servant,

J. BERTIE.

LET

L E T T E R LXXVI.

Lady ISABELLA VERE to Dr. BERTIE.

December 13.

AN D can you, my dear Doctor Bertie, can you advise me to return to England, only because Lord Sommers wishes his kinsman would marry me ? I could almost be angry with you. Do you really imagine I will sacrifice every thing to my unhappy passion. No, I have already given too much to *love* ; and it is now high time to consult *prudence*. How can I support the thought of Mr. Gower's being supposed to wed me only at his kinsman's intercession, or how can I be happy with the man
whose

whose affections are fixed upon another ?

Greatly has Mr. Gower suffered for my sake already, and I will not add to his infelicity:—Yes, though I own my heart is set on Gower, though, whilst I write, I wet the paper with my tears, I will endeavour, like Miss Carleton, to practise a glorious self-denial, and, whilst I admire her example, emulate her virtues.

What ! not a line from Mr. Gower ? and is this the manner in which I am recalled ? Alas ! it is then too plain that his secret heart still disapproves the match as much as ever,
and

and it is to his uncle I must owe that he will deign at last to address me as a lover. . Therefore I must decline this invitation, and remain a willing exile from my country, to which I never more expect to return.

Yet, my dear tutor, am I infinitely obliged to you for your tender care, and the regard you have for my welfare, which is such as I never can forget whilst I am

ISABELLA VERE.

L E T.

LETTER LXVIII.

Miss CHARLOTTE CARLETON to

Miss ARABELLA HALE.

December 8.

IN spite, my dear friend, of all your chiding, nay more, in spite of all your compliments paid to *the goodness of my heart*, as you are pleased to term it, I cannot repent a jot of my behaviour to Mr. Gower, either before or since the receipt of your letter. What I first did was dictated by honour and conscience, and what I have since done has proceeded from the same motives: for I have withdrawn myself, with my uncle and Sir George's family, into the country, where it is likely that I may spend the remainder of my days.

Ye

Yet think not, Arabella, that I am either displeased with your chiding or your friendly advice. Well do you know, my friend, that affectation has ever been a stranger to my breast ; and those *delicacies* you mention are so strongly implanted in my nature, that it is even impossible for me to conquer them. Besides, were it not better that I should resign my worthy lover to the arms of Isabella, than that I should be wedded to him, and break her heart with sorrow ? To me the self-denial (for I own it is one) will be less painful, and I am resolved to practise it ; and, with regard to the consequences, you have well divined my answer.

Sorry

Sorry am I that your happiness is still likely to be delayed. May you never meet with such obstacles as have arisen to me. — After all, my dear, I promise myself that you will not be so angry with me, as to deprive me of the pleasure of hearing from you, which is ever a consolation to your

CHARLOTTE.

L E T.

LETTER LXIX.

Mr. GOWER to JAS. SELWYN, Esq;

December 16.

HOW strange, my friend, are the awards of Heaven, how mysterious the decrees of Providence. —

Here is a strange alteration indeed. Would you imagine that I, who was even dying for the love of Miss Carleton, have written to solicit the lady Isabella's return, in order to address her as a lover?

My uncle makes this the condition of his future favour; but that is a trifle: my Charlotte has not only made a vow which has blasted my
hopes,

hopes, but is also retired into the country. I fear some happier lover possesses her affections : what if Seymour ?— But I will not tire you with my surmises : suffice to say, that thus abandoned by her, and urged on all sides in favour of the lady Isabella, I have at last resolved to take the latter to my arms.

You are, no doubt, surprized at this change in my method of reasoning and acting : but the world, my Selwyn has put an end to my hopes of happiness, and nothing remains for me, but to contribute to the felicity of others. This I must do, or,

144 The Force of Nature ; or,

as I before proposed, withdraw myself at once from society.

May you be happy in your return to your native country, happy in the possession of her you love, whilst I am left to strive against the adverse stream of life, and endeavour to steer, through the rough blasts of affliction, my tempest-worn bark into the harbour of peace. —Adieu!—think on your

GOWER.

L E T,

L E T T E R LXX.

From the same to the same.

December 18.

NOTHING is talked of here, but the preparations for our nuptials, which my uncle is desirous of having solemnized immediately on the arrival of lady Isabella.

Few men, I believe, are so dull on the approach of a wedding, as I am : I assure you, it has with me all the air of a funeral.—Dreams, considered as the interpreters of futurity, I have ever despised ; yet last night I had such an one as has left a deep impression on my mind.

VOL. II.

H

Whether

Whether it were occasioned by my thoughts dwelling perpetually on this marriage, or by what other cause I know not ; but I had no sooner closed my eyes than the following vision presented itself before me.

I imagined myself in the midst of a large garden, adorned with all that art or nature could furnish to make it beautiful. From the centre proceeded two large walks, and each appeared terminated by a statue. One of these figures represented Miss Carleton in the habit of a Venus, the other lady Isabella in the character of Virtue, as drawn in that famous piece called
the

the Choice of Hercules. I advanced towards Charlotte, but her image vanished from my sight, and I suddenly found myself in the other walk, at the feet of Isabella, who had lost much of the awful dignity of her countenance, and threw herself into several wanton attitudes ;—at length she clasped me in her arms. A sudden horror seized me ; loud thunders rolled over our heads, and the pleasant garden was changed into a dreary church-yard, full of yawning graves, from one of which arose my dead mother, and descended with me and Isabella into the tomb, which closed upon us, and the fright awakened

me. A cold sweat hung upon my brow; I trembled like the quivering aspin; and my bed appeared to me as a coffin. When I arose, I perceived I had torn the miniature of lady Isabella from my bosom with such violence, that I had drawn some blood from my left breast, which stained the picture.

All this must appear extraordinary to any one, and, I must confess, shocked me at first: but I place no confidence in this kind of idle superstition; I only mention the circumstance to shew you what a commotion the mind must be in, that is disturbed with such distempered fancies.

My

My dear friend, you may now conceive that you behold me, as making the last effort towards rendering myself beneficial to society. I am endeavouring to make a conquest of myself, and sacrificing to the happiness of others my nearest and dearest inclinations. Believe me, Selwyn, there is scarcely any such thing as real virtue without self-denial. Rough are the ways and thorny are the paths through which the good man must pass, before he can expect to arrive at any tolerable felicity in this sublunary world. The task is an arduous one, but great is the reward; no less than peace of mind here, and certain

150 The Force of Nature ; or,

happinefs hereafter. Imperfect creatures that we are ! How selfish are we in our very acts of piety and benevolence !

Forgive me, Selwyn, these tedious reflexions ; but when I write to you I give a loose to my pen, and lay open to you my most secret thoughts ; and mine are very melancholy at present. But I will forbear adding any thing farther to the length of this epistle, except that I remain unalterably yours,

GOWER.

L E T.

L E T T E R LXXI.

JAS. SELWYN, Esq; to Mr. GOWER.

December 28.

WITH surprize, indeed, my dear friend, I read your last, and with the highest admiration of the goodness of your heart. But may not this self-denial, on which you say all virtue is founded, be strained too far, and carried to too high a pitch. It is a melancholy consideration that you cannot purchase Isabella's happiness, but at the expence of your own? Yet I will not be the person to discourage you from prosecuting the noble plan which you have laid down,

H 4

since

152 The Force of Nature ; or,

since there is so little hope of your possessing Charlotte.

I expect I shall see your intended bride, as she passes by this city. It is long since I had that pleasure ; but I remember her ladyship to be a fine-featured woman, with the presence of a queen, and an extraordinary share of understanding. May she have the good fortune, though late, to inspire in you a mutual passion, and then add most to your felicity, when you least expect it. But much I doubt the event.

The dream which you mentioned has something very extraordinary in
its

its circumstances; but I never consult these nocturnal fancies. Yet I often hold a counsel with my own heart; and I own, that if I were in your place, and my heart had declared itself as strongly against this match as yours has done, I firmly believe, I should never have been persuaded to it.

Your case, Mr. Gower, is indeed very singular, and depends on points so delicate in their nature, that it is very difficult to give you advice.—If Miss Carleton has indeed cast her eyes on any other person for a lover, you are about to take the best step you possibly could have taken. But what

154 The Force of Nature; or,

foundation can there be for such a
surmise?

I am glad, however, to find you
have quite laid aside your design of
retiring from the world, the execution
of which would have given great un-
easiness to all your friends, but to
none more than to

Your faithful

SELWYN.

L E T.

LETTER LXXII.

From the same to the same.

December 31.

I HAVE an odd sort of a story to communicate to you, my Gower ; how far it may concern you, I shall leave you to judge when I have related it.

Chancing, since my last, to fall into company where your affairs were the subject of conversation, an English gentleman threw out several hints that he was acquainted with many circumstances relative to them, and, among the rest, expressed great pleasure to find that you had no longer
any

any thoughts of marrying Miss Carleton, whom he called in French, Madame Charlotte, and said the match would have proved your ruin, if it had taken place. Hearing him discourse in this manner, I gave him an invitation to come and dine with me the day following, which he accepted, and promised to explain the latter part of his discourse, the meaning of which I was at a loss to comprehend. But he did not keep his appointment, and I was since informed that he set out that very day for Calais, on his return to England. He says his name is Mills ;— if you should see such an one, perhaps it would not be prudent, after

after what I have above recited, to lay yourself open to him. Your own good sense will suggest all that can be said farther on this head.

However, I should not have troubled you with a second letter, but to acquaint you with this adventure: if the information should prove serviceable to you, I need not tell you that it will be a high satisfaction to

SELWYN.

L E T-

L E T T E R LXXIII.

Dr. BERTIE to Lady ISABELLA
VERE.

December 29.

STILL, my dear pupil, still do
you delay your return to England !
Is it not your part to take advantage
of the favourable disposition which
all things are in here ? Has not Mr.
Gower written to you with his own
hand, and, with a tender care, ob-
viated every objection that could be
made even by delicacy itself ? Does
not lord Sommers wait with impa-
tience to welcome you ? What then
detains you ? For Heaven's sake, make
haste,

haste, and take possession of your happiness.

I have seen the earl of P——; but the account I have had from him is far from being satisfactory. All he knows is, that the earl his uncle, then abroad, brought up a female infant which was generally supposed to be his own, his lady having died in childbed; nor was the secret discovered to any, till he declared, upon his deathbed, that the child, (which was your ladyship) was not his; yet he added, that he would leave her a fortune equal to that of an earl's daughter, but still forbore mentioning the

160 The Force of Nature ; or,
the real name and quality of the person.

This was all the information that I could get, which is, in effect, no more than we knew before. So this affair must remain a mystery for the present ; though the young lord will use all his endeavours to satisfy you and himself concerning it.

But let not your disappointment in this particular, I conjure you, any ways prevent or delay your coming hither, on which every thing depends. Mr. Gower, I find, suspects that Miss Carleton has sought herself out another lover ; and this surmise renders him

him the more impatient for your arrival. Your ladyship will find all things prepared for your reception. For my own part, I long ardently to see you crowned with that happiness which your pure heart deserves, and once more enjoying that tranquility of mind which you possessed when your dying guardian committed you to the care of

Your devoted

J. BERTIE.

L E T-

L E T T E R LXXIV.

Lady ISABELLA VERE to Dr. BERTIE.

January 9.

SOOOTHED by your persuasions,
and impelled by my hitherto unhappy love, I am about to return, my dear Dr. Bertie, to my native country ; yet are my present feelings more like those of a wretch who is going to banishment or death than those of one who is verging fast towards the possession of her wishes.

But prepare, my dear tutor, to receive, console, and support me, and to act the part of a father, in bestowing my hand where my heart has long
since

since been devoted. Some time ago, I thought myself firmly resolved not to accept of this invitation ; but Mr. Gower's letter has prevailed, and I have gone too far to recede.

Yet I am very uneasy that this important secret is not yet unravelled.— Besides, how is my Gower to receive me, as a daughter of the late earl of P——, or as a foundling, nursed by his charity, and by his magnificent liberality set upon a footing with princes ? I cannot bear the thoughts of deceiving him, and I must deal ingenuously with him, whatever may be the consequence, and before he receives my vows at the altar, discover

ver to him all that I know of myself: alas! how little is that *all*, and how unsatisfactory is it likely to prove!

But your care, your good offices, my friend and father, shall never be forgotten by me.—Yes, you have stood in the place of a parent to me, and it is to you that I owe myself. Is there a wish, a desire of yours that I can gratify?—Alas, good man! your wishes, your desires ever flow smoothly on, within the bounds of moderation, while mine, like an impetuous torrent, have borne down all before them, and too often made shipwreck of my peace of mind.

Adieu!

Adieu ! be as assiduous as possible, in waiting, at proper times, on the earl of P——, and reminding him of his promise ; continue to speak favourably of Mr. Gower to his uncle, and neglect not, in your prayers, to remember

Your affectionate

ISABELLA

L E T

166 The Force of Nature ; or,

L E T T E R LXXV.

Mr. GOWER to JAS. SELWYN, Esq;

January 6.

A STRANGE adventure, my Selwyn, is that which you related in your last : any thing that so nearly concerns Miss Carleton, I should think it well worth a serious enquiry, if I could find out the person. But why are you so shy of giving your opinion of the matter ? You know your advice is always welcome to me, and perhaps I never wanted it more than at this juncture.

I wait the arrival of my bride, like one who lingers in a prison, expecting

ing his sentence, and a sombrous melancholy hangs upon my spirits; but I will not give way to vain dreams and idle fancies:—no; I will steadily pursue my plan, and gain a painful victory over myself, of which my own heart (whatever its present suggestions may be) will certainly, in the end, approve. So concludes

Your unaltered

GOWER.

L E T-

LETTER LXXVI.

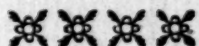
From the same to the same.

January 13,

AFTER long waiting for, my friend, the lady Isabella is at last arrived in London.—She is arrived, and I have received her ; but such a meeting ! on her side, it beggars description :—so much tenderness, joined with so much grace and majesty, affected me beyond expression ; yet, notwithstanding her beauty, notwithstanding my firm resolution to act the lover, my recreant heart (which, at the most distant glance of Miss Carleton, would have bounded with joy) recoiled within me, and would scarcely

ly

ly suffer me to give her a welcome:—cold was my salute, dull and spiritless my conversation; and I was struck with a secret dread, which I was hardly able to conceal.



I have, this very minute, received a letter from Miss Carleton, in which she exhorts me to persevere in my resolutions, repeats her vow, and seems to promise me much happiness with Isabella. From the indifference with which this epistle is penned, I am partly confirmed in my suspicions of her having fixed her affections on another. Be that as it may, I must endeavour to return the love of my

170 The Force of Nature ; or,

Isabella, her love, that fought me out in obscurity, and would follow me through poverty, or even death itself. At any rate, I will purchase her happiness.

Make haste, my Selwyn, that you may come early enough to be present at our nuptials ; for the latter end of this month shall make an husband, (shall I say an happy one ?) of

Your faithful

GOWER.

LET-

LETTER LXXVII.

Mrs. ARDEN to R. LELAND, Esq;

January 20.

NOW, Mr. Leland, Fortune indeed smiles upon our designs;—Gower is running headlong on his ruin, being absolutely determined to marry Isabella, for which his whole party load him with commendations.

The bride, poor, thoughtless creature, will be led, dressed up like a victim, to the altar, where they will mutually give and receive the pledges of each other's ruin. Surely I deserve all the glory of this scheme; to me alone it belongs, whose great

172 The Force of Nature ; or,

revenge first excited, whose spirit still
inspires, and whose conduct guides
you.

It should seem, after all, that Isabella is really a virgin : —hereafter, she may find cause to wish she had remained so ; while Charlotte will curse her ill-timed delicacy, which caused her to refuse her lover ; and the new favourite of lord Sommers will be wishing to quit life at a time when the generality of men would be most willing to enjoy it.

But the chief intent of this letter is to inform you, that a young fellow, lately arrived from France, who goes
by

by the name of Mills, is now on his journey to town from ——shire. He has it in his power to defeat our designs ;—I have therefore dispersed several letters, to embarrass him on his journey, and delay, if possible, his coming hither till Gower's wedding is over : but if these methods should prove ineffectual, it must be the earl of M****'s business to send him on a fool's errand into the country again, or, at least, to prevent his seeing either Isabel or the Gowers. I mention the lord M**** in particular, because I can divine, by my skill in prophecy, that this stranger will call at his lordship's house in London.

Now what, in the name of mischief, is become of our associates?—Are they all dead or lost?—Is Edmonds gone abroad, to spend the remainder of his days in a monastery, by way of doing penance for his past sins?—If he be, it will be long before his example will be followed by

MARGARET ARDEN.

LET.

L E T T E R LXXVIII.

ROBERT LELAND, Esq; to the Earl
of M****.

January 23.

INCLOSED I send your lordship letters from Mrs. Arden: she seems very confident of her scheme, which, I must confess, is beyond my comprehension. But why must I be kept in the dark?—I am not apt to start aside, why then must I be hoodwinked?

I am really amazed, when I consider how these last six months have been spent in marching and counter-marching, plotting and counterplot-

I 4

ting,

ting, while, for aught I see, we are as far from gaining our ends as ever! Now a swift confusion at once overtake the whole family of Gower! — Would you think it, my lord? I am still absolutely pining for the possession of the prudish Charlotte: justly does Mrs. Arden blame me for not using my power over her when I had it; it may be difficult to meet with such another opportunity. But I must endeavour to surprize, and force her to my will. As she is just come of age, her fortune, which is in her own hands, will be gladly presented me, together with her person, to wipe off the stain cast upon her honour. The
former

former will come seasonably enough, and, as to the latter, I will take care that shall prove no obstacle to me in the pursuit of my pleasures.

There is a scheme for you! Neither your lordship nor Mrs Arden, I believe, could have hit on a better.

Is it not strange that Gower, who can hardly be supposed to want courage, has never ventured to challenge any of us in an honourable way? It might not be amiss to remove him at this juncture, as it would prove the means, in all probability, of bringing a large estate into your lordship's family. But this, at present, there is little chance of.

I 5

Farewel,

Farewel, my lord ! If I can bring my plan to bear, I shall expect, (as our female ally says, to have all the honour of it to myself ; and make no doubt but you will all be ready to own my superiority, and bow with lowly reverence to the genius of

LELAND.

LET.

L E T T E R LXXIX.

The Earl of M**** to ROBERT
LELAND, Esq;

January 27.

W H Y so angry, Leland, with
our auxiliary, Margaret? I as-
sure thee, man, she is likely to do us
signal service. If thou canst not see
through her plan, must it be the worse
for that? Thou shouldst rather sup-
pose it the *better*, and pay thyself a
compliment into the bargain.—Indeed
all plans which are built upon the
known tendency of peoples passions
and inclinations generally succeed,
because the very objects of the plot
are

180 The Force of Nature; or,
are themselves employed in promoting
the ends of the schemer: such, if I
mistake not, is the case before us.
But *FINIS coronat opus*; — wait the
END, and then determine as to the
merits of the performance.

Besides, as before has been observed, there will be so little left for thee to do in this business, that thou mayest well spare thyself the trouble of enquiry. Seat thyself contentedly, therefore, under thy own vine, and under thy own fig-tree, and leave us to bear the heat and burden of the day.—But I had almost forgotten thy own scheme.

Partu-

Parturiunt montes, & nascetur ridiculus mus.

And so I fear it will prove with this grand affair of thine. Why, in the name of common-sense, who doubts but all this may be atchieved, *if* thou canst surprize Charlotte, and get her again into thy power, but the means of effecting that purpose must be found out, or all thy goodly project falls to the ground.

To be serious, Mr. Leland, what are we labouring for, but something of this kind? let us bring the former part of the design to bear, which is *ours*, and the latter, which is *yours*, will follow in course.

But

But Gower and all the friends of Charlotte must be removed, or effectually prevented from obstructing you, before you can think to get her into your power, warned and guarded as she is. This shall be our endeavour ; yet, pry'thee do not make thyself an ass. Possess the fair prude, if thou canst, nay, commit matrimony with her if thou wilt, for the sake of her fortune ; but no love, good, courteous 'squire.

As to Gower ; though he wants not for courage in some respects, yet he is such a bigot to what he calls *religious principles*, that he would as soon

soon be d—n'd, as fight a duel, though he would cut thy throat or mine in a skirmish, with a hearty good will.

So I find it is imagined that David Payne is gone off;—he may go to the d—l if he will: he has proceeded too far with us to be ever trusted by our adversaries. I hear that Ramble is recovered:—he really *repents* too, I think they say, and is turned fool. If he turns *knave* likewise, and endeavours to thwart or betray us, his date of life must be short; surely we can get him dispatched amongst us.

I wish the treaty of marriage were concluded with Isabella; that once over, we may laugh at the Gowers and Arnolds for ever. As

As to the “ *marching and counter-marching, &c.*” which you complain of, was it not, in the nature of things, unavoidable ? And if blind Chance has disappointed us in our schemes. who but Chance can be answerable for the failure ? No man can insure success to himself while there is such a thing as accident. But you are become so impatient that there is now no such thing as keeping you quiet.

The populace, it seems, pulled Ramble’s house down, while he fled for his life:—if he cants so well as I am informed he does, I think they cannot well do less than rebuild it for him,

him, in the form of a meeting-house, where he may preach *repentance*, and proclaim his miraculous conversion to the great congregation.

But I will now bid thee farewel, exhorting thee to persevere in the *old cause*, and above all, be patient, and confide in the vigilance of the indefatigable Margaret and

Thy stedfast friend,

M****.

L E T-

L E T T E R LXXX.

Mr. RAMBLE to Captain SEYMOUR.

January 21.

AFTER the part I have so lately acted, it is with shame that I address you, my once-dear friend, to confess my errors, and, through your means, implore the pardon of those whom I have injured.

I am well aware of the difficulties which I am likely to meet with in attempting to gain your credit to my professions ; yet am I resolved to persevere, and hope, by my future conduct, to convince you thoroughly of my sincerity.

With

With blushes I acknowledge my ill behaviour to you, and illiberal railing against you, for your adherence to virtue, and the cause of Mr. Gower, and entreat your pardon for my fault, which, you may remember, once occasioned very high words between us, when that worthy man interposed, I believe, little thinking himself or his interests to be the subject-matter of our debate.

As the proof and first fruits of my amendment, I have disclaimed all connexions with my former companions, and am ready to declare all that I know of their vile plots against the
Gower.

Gower and Arnold families, in which I have been but too deeply concerned; though, I profess, I am much in the dark as to their present wicked plan of operations, having held no intercourse with them since my sickness.

I expect not, however, to have any degree of confidence reposed in me, till, by a long probation, and continuance in the paths of virtue, I shall be seen to merit it.

I tremble when I look back on my past life, and reflect how fast I was verging towards destruction, had it not pleased Heaven, by afflicting me, to bring me to a just sense of myself,
and

and once more to recall me to my duty.—It was, indeed, a sure indication of the corruption of my heart, that I generally attributed to bad motives the best actions of the best of men; thus aiming to bring down to my own level of wickedness, those to whose height of virtue I could not hope to aspire.

This evil disposition it shall now be my care to correct; and, whilst I acknowledge my own unworthiness, to pay the tribute of praise due to the merits of the good, and to celebrate their virtues, at the same time that I endeavour to copy after their bright example.

Will

Will you give me your kind assistance in this my undertaking, and once more deign to look upon me? I own I have no claim to your regard, and have acted in such a manner as to put myself below every consideration :— in your goodness, therefore, in the generosity of your heart, and your compassionate allowance for the faults of others, is placed the sole confidence of

The penitent

J. RAMBLE.

L E T.

L E T T E R LXXXI.

Captain SEYMOUR to Mr. GOWER.

January 31.

CAN you, my excellent friend, forgive my long silence? I assure you, a business of the last importance, at present, engrosses my attention—no less than matrimony;—the amiable, the accomplished Harriet, has consented to be mine, and we shall soon come to town, in order to be united for ever.

I grieve, my friend, to hear that you are about to match yourself contrary to your own inclinations. What the lady Isabella Vere may be I know
not;

192 The Force of Nature ; or,
not ; but I think Miss Carleton is an
angel.

I wait to bring a friend to London,
to witness our nuptials, with whom I
lately renewed an old acquaintance.
I will introduce him to you ; for I
know you will like him extremely.

Meanwhile, I am so agreeably situ-
ated, that the dreary winter passes
cheerfully away. — I am amazed that
you should imagine Miss Carleton ad-
mits a new lover : were you present
here, I am persuaded, you would soon
be very fully convinced of the con-
trary.

Inclosed

Inclosed I transmit you a letter from my former friend, Ramble, together with the copies of three others, one to Miss Carleton, one to Miss Symphon, and another to myself, in which he professes a thorough reformation. I am really inclined to believe him sincere; yet (as he himself allows) I think it highly proper that he should be tried before he is trusted.

David Payne, I understand, is gone abroad, having borrowed money, for that purpose, of every one that was weak enough to supply him. As to Edmonds, nobody can tell what is become of him; but it is supposed that he has followed David's example.

As there is no doubt of lord M****'s being privy to the wicked schemes of Leland, it will behove you to be wary, having such powerful adversaries. Perhaps they are, at this very instant, busied in plotting against your peace, or even your life.—Be not then too careless of yourself, I conjure you ; but take, at least in this particular, the advice of

Your faithful friend,

SEYMOUR.

L E T

LETTER LXXXII.

Mr. MILLS to Captain SEYMOUR.

February 2.

I AM still in hopes, my dear captain, to arrive in London early enough to be present at your wedding; though I have met with some unaccountable delays in my affairs, which have much perplexed me, and have been the occasion hitherto of detaining me in this part of the country.

When I arrive in town, I shall have an affair to transact, in which, it is probable, I shall ask your assistance, in finding out the parties. This busi-

196 The Force of Nature; or,

ness I was partly engaged to settle whilst I was abroad, when letters of private concern suddenly called me home, and occasioned me to quit France abruptly.

I have no more to add, at present, but that I remain, with my best wishes for your welfare, till I have the pleasure of seeing you again in London,

Your sincere friend,

J. MILLS.

LET-

LETTER LXXXIII.

Lady ISABELLA VERE to Doctor
BERTIE.

February 3.

THE day, my dear Dr. Bertie,
is now very near, on which I
am to be united for ever to the man
of my choice ; yet, as I have before
observed to you, I am far from find-
ing myself more happy. Is this ow-
ing to a peculiarity of temper in me,
or does it arise from the frailty of all
sublunary enjoyments, and their in-
sufficiency to make us blest ? Does
felicity fly from us, and, as a phan-
tom, elude our eager grasp, just when
we think to embrace it ? Or do long-

expected pleasures, like glittering prospects, fade as we approach them?— Perhaps the human mind is over-wearied in the contemplation of its wishes before it arrives at the fruition of them, and (like the eye, oppressed with long gazing on any particular object) seeks relief in variety, and thus creates to itself a perpetual source of new wants and fresh disquietude.— However this may be, the present situation of my own mind, is to me one proof that there is no such thing as real felicity on earth.

Methinks, my dear tutor, I would have you ever near me; more especially

cially do I want your assistance at this time, when all my hopes and fears are awakened, and my mind is in such a troubled state, as it is more easy to imagine than to describe.

I am carested beyond measure by the lord Sommers. It is to be feared that nobleman will soon lose his son, a circumstance that perhaps increases his fondness for Mr. Gower and me. My intended husband ever addresses me, if not with real passion, yet with something so very like it, and behaves with such a tender complaisance as strengthens my love, though it increases not my joy. This is a seem-

ing contradiction, yet it is strictly true. I am besides very uneasy concerning the secret of my birth ; but as things are circumstanced at present, I must be content to remain in the dark with regard to this important affair. However, I am determined to come to an explanation with Mr. Gower, on the very morning of our marriage before our hands are joined, that I may not give a counterfeit to his embraces.

Captain Seymour and all the Arnold family are invited to the wedding ; but if Miss Carleton should be there, I shall die with confusion : however, I doubt not but her delicacy

cacy and good sense will determine her to act with propriety in regard to this nice point. Indeed she is the noblest-minded lady I ever knew, and no time will be able to erase from my mind the memory of the obligations I owe to her.

Make haste, my dear friend, to comfort me with your presence, than which nothing can be more welcome to your

ISABELLA.

K 5

LET.

L E T T E R LXXXIV.

Dr. BERTIE to Lady ISABELLA
VERE.

February 5.

COMPOSE, my dear lady, your troubled spirits, and sooth your mind to rest. Reflect that you are about to take possession of your wish, and endeavour to make yourself happy in the fruition of it.—Joys indeed, as you have justly observed, are ever like landscapes, brightest in a distant prospect, and fade on our nearer approach: yet, if we consider how much of what is called felicity lies within our reach, as centering in ourselves, and our own opinions, and how
neces-

neceſſary a ſucceſſion of deſires and purſuits is to the ſcheme of univerſal nature, we may well acquit Heaven of the charge of cruelty to its creatures, even though the pleaſures of *imagination* ſhould be found to overballance thoſe of *enjoyment*.—The perſon who has nothing left to hope is ſupremely unhappy.—We therefore ought to receive with thankfulneſs that ſhare of happineſs which falls to our lot below; as being aſſured that we ſhall, in the end, enjoy as much as our ſtate can bear; remembering alſo that this world is not the place where we muſt expect to find true felicity; thoſe who ſet out in life with
ſuch

such a view will always return from the search disappointed ;—it is placed in a higher state ; let us endeavour to deserve, and there is no doubt but, at last, we shall obtain it.

Mr. Gower's behaviour is such as ought to give you great satisfaction ; his tenderness, time and your cares will, doubtless, ripen into real love ; and there is little likelihood of Miss Carleton's being present at your ladyship's nuptials, at least if she acts consistently with herself.

Lay aside then, my dear patroness, all unnecessary doubts and fears, and prepare to receive with a chearful
brow

brow and thankful heart the blessing you have so long desired. Remember what you owe to Heaven, to your friends, and to yourself, and let not a gloomy melancholy hang upon you, at a time which you ought to devote to social pleasures and to innocent mirth. — That you may be happily wedded to the deserving Mr. Gower, and live long with him, beloved and beloved, enjoying all the happiness this world can afford, are the ardent prayers of

Your entirely devoted

J. BERTIE.

L E T.

LETTER LXXXV.

ROBERT LELAND, Esq; to the Earl
of M****.

February 10.

I HAVE just time, my lord, to inform you, that the stranger Mrs. Arden mentioned by the name of Mills, and who, she said, had it in his power to defeat our schemes, is arrived this evening at Hyde-Park-Corner: to-morrow, I suppose, your lordship will see him. The inclosed packet, from our female friend, will inform you of farther particulars.

For my own part, as I find I am likely to stand only for a cypher in
this

this affair, I will take your lordship's advice, and trouble myself little about the matter: however, though I am not, in your esteem, worthy to be trusted with a secret; yet I doubt not, but when you, or any of our good friends, want any troublesome business executed, you will readily enough know how to apply to

Your quondam friend,

LELAND.

L E T.

L E T T E R LXXXVI.

The Earl of M**** to ROBERT
LELAND, Esq;

February 11.

STILL in an angry mood, Leland? I thought the air of London would have put these whims out of thy head. What a plague ails thee? What matter is it by whose means a plot is carried on, so it takes effect at last? I am quite angry with thee for thy foolish prejudices. Thou hast my thanks, however, for forwarding Mrs. Arden's packet with such expedition. There is no doubt but it will be of great use.

All

All things are now drawing towards a conclusion; and if you will but sit quiet, the game will drop into your mouth.

So Ramble is really an apostate: I find he has written submissive letters to all the clan of our enemies. By Heaven he shall dearly buy his repentance. Does the canting villain think to make a property of us. I believe you will at least confess it is well that *he* was not trusted with this last affair.—If he should come in your way, and you do not resent his ill behaviour, and the insolent reflexions which, it seems, he has cast upon us,
I will

I will never speak to thee again. If I light on him, his doom is fixed. David Payne is not worth our wasting a moment's thought about; we shall be able to do without him.

I expect every moment to see young Mills.—Farewel! be of good comfort, and learn to place a greater confidence in

Your friend,

M****.

L E T.

LETTER LXXXVII.

Mr. GOWER to JAS. SELWYN, Esq;

February 12.

TO-MORROW, my friend, is to be the *day*, I wish I could say the *happy* one, that is to make me the husband of Isabella.

All our friends are arrived from the country, except Miss Carleton, whose delicacy, doubtless, forbids her being present at our nuptials. I have been too hasty, I fear, in my surmises, with regard to that excellent creature's admitting the addresses of another lover; at least, it is plain that Seymour is not the man; for he was so much in
earnest

earnest in his suit to Miss Arnold, and has prosecuted it so successfully, that he is to marry that lady within a few weeks.

Sorry am I, my Selwyn, that we cannot have your company here on this occasion. It would at least be the means of putting some face of joy on the affair, as your presence could not fail to brighten the countenance, and enliven the conversation, of

Your faithful

GOWER.

L E T.

L E T T E R LXXXVIII

The Earl of M**** to - ROBERT
LELAND, Esq;

February 12.

NOW, Leland, strain every nerve
to accomplish your ends: all
things have fallen out as I expected,
Sir John Gretton and the Arnold fa-
mily are come up to town post-haste,
in order to be present at this fatal
wedding; and Charlotte, who, from
a point of delicacy, stays behind, is
left entirely unguarded. You are now
no longer an object of their fear.
Take then this opportunity of return-
ing suddenly into the country, where,
by

by the help of a little stratagem, you may easily surprize and carry her off: meanwhile this marriage will put all things into such confusion, that the adverse party will not, in all probability, be in a condition any ways to obstruct you. Margaret Arden, who lives concealed not far from Sir John's seat, will meet you at *****, and assist you in this undertaking.

Gower and his Isabella will be irretrievably undone;—tomorrow seals their ruin. I have seen Mills, and sent him into Hampshire, to seek for Seymour among his friends, who is actually here on the spot; so we shall
have

have breathing-time enough, and all will be over, before he can find out his error, and return.

All these arrangements being settled, we must now repair to our several posts and stations, which we are not to quit till victory declares for us. Then shall I smile to see what a pitiful figure these *wise* people will make, when unexpected mischiefs surround them, and the storm breaks over their heads from a quarter whence they least expect it.

Then, Leland, shalt thou know our plan, and confess the excellence
of

216 The Force of Nature; or,

of it. Meanwhile, do thou thy part,
and rest contented;—a few days will
unravel the whole.

Adieu, friend, follow my advice, and
Margaret's, and be prosperous; and
when you have gotten the stubborn
fair one into your power, give imme-
diate notice of your success to

Your old acquaintance,

M****.

L E T.

L E T T E R LXXXIX.

Captain SEYMOUR to JAMES
SELWYN, Esq;

February 14.

BY the desire, Sir, of my friend
Mr. Gower, I write this to in-
form you of one of the most extra-
ordinary incidents that ever I was wit-
ness to in my life.

When we were all assembled yes-
terday at lord Sommers's, in order to
attend the intended bride and bride-
groom to his lordship's own chapel,
where the ceremony was to have been
performed, a gentleman sent word

VOL. II.

L

that

that he must speak with Mr. Gower, that instant, on very urgent business, who returned within a quarter of an hour, with a countenance as pale as death, and seemingly much disturbed. Lady Isabella being very solicitous to know the cause of this sudden change, he fixed his eyes upon her, and cried, “ Dear, unhappy creature, you will
 “ know too soon; but for the present
 “ I am so much indisposed, that I
 “ must intreat the leave of this company to withdraw.” And so saying, he retired in great seeming confusion.

Soon after entered my old acquaintance, Mr. Mills, with whom I find,
 you

you have had some conversation in France:— after making a short apology, he told the trembling Isabella, that if she would withdraw a while with him, he would inform her of the cause of Mr. Gower's uneasiness.— They had been but a few minutes gone out of the room, when a bell was heard to ring violently, and we were desired to walk into an adjacent apartment, where we found lady Isabella in a swoon. She was taken immediate care of, and conveyed to a proper chamber. But all eyes were now turned on Mr. Mills, who thus explained himself. “ To account at
“ once for this scene of confusion in

“ one short sentence, I here pro-
 “ nounce the intended bride and
 “ bridegroom to be brother and sis-
 “ ter.”—A mute astonishment seized
 the whole company on hearing this
 unexpected declaration, when my ac-
 quaintance thus proceeded. “ If the
 “ time had not been so short, I cer-
 “ tainly should not have been so ab-
 “ rupt ; but I met with such delays
 “ in my affairs as retarded my arrival
 “ in town, till within these two days.
 “ Being charged with letters to the
 “ earl of M****, I waited on his
 “ lordship, of whom I enquired af-
 “ ter captain Seymour, when that no-
 “ bleman” (addressing himself to me)
 “ sent

“ sent me to seek for you in Hamp-
“ shire ; but happening, very luckily,
“ to light on one of your old friends
“ in my way, he turned me back,
“ with proper directions to you, at
“ Sir George Arnold’s, in London.
“ It was from him, likewise, that I
“ gathered the true account of this
“ treaty of marriage, the whole tenor
“ of which I had before utterly mis-
“ taken. I was no sooner set right
“ in this matter, than I hastened to
“ town, to prevent the destructive
“ consequences of such an union ;
“ but, notwithstanding all the expe-
“ dition I used, I did not arrive there
“ till a full hour after the guests were
L 3 “ departed

“ departed to the intended wedding ;
 “ on which I followed, and was so
 “ happy as to come before the cere-
 “ mony had passed.”

As Mr. Mills paused here, I requested, in the name of the company, that he would go on to inform us upon what grounds he founded his conjecture, that Mr. Gower and the lady Isabella Vere were so nearly related.

“ I wish to Heaven,” replied he,
 “ captain Seymour, for the sake of
 “ the unhappy lady, that I built on-
 “ ly upon *conjecture* ; but I am too
 “ certain of the truth of what I have
 advanced.

“ advanced. To throw a farther
“ light upon the matter, in the first
“ place, I must acknowledge myself to
“ be the natural son of the late earl
“ of P——, and the only person to
“ whom he discovered the secret
“ of his supposed daughter's birth,
“ obliging me, at the same time, to
“ take an oath of secrecy; by the
“ terms and conditions of which I
“ must consider myself, however, as
“ fully discharged from the obli-
“ gation, the necessity of the present
“ case now authorizing me to disclose
“ what I was otherwise bound to
“ conceal. It is well known to this
“ company, I believe, that the father

“ of Mr. Gower, who was an officer
“ abroad, was slain in a private quar-
“ rel, but by whom was unknown.
“ The earl, my father, was the man,
“ and never afterwards would he
“ draw a sword. The present Mr.
“ Gower was then a child, of about
“ three years old, left under the care
“ of one Massey, a relation of his
“ late mother. That lady, at this
“ time, died in childbed of Charlotte
“ Isabella Gower, now called lady
“ Isabella Vere. Her the earl took out
“ of the arms of her nurse, and, a
“ like misfortune having happened
“ to his lady, resolved to educate her
“ as his own daughter ; lady P——
“ had

“ had been delivered of a dead child,
“ which favoured the deceit, and the
“ peer thought this the only atone-
“ ment he could make for his rash-
“ ness. As none of the late Mr.
“ Gower’s relations made any en-
“ quiries about his family or con-
“ cerns, this innocent fraud, which
“ the nurse only was privy to, was
“ easily carried on ; nor was it sus-
“ pected even by me, till my dying
“ father disclosed the affair to me,
“ as I have already related it. I then
“ solemnly swore never to reveal the
“ secret, unless for the good of Isa-
“ bella.---Let the company here as-
“ sembled judge whether I am not
“ acquitted of my oath.”

A murmur of applause ensued, and my friend thus resumed his discourse :

“ Miss Charlotte Isabella (for so she
 “ was christened) had always been
 “ called by her second name by the
 “ earl, in remembrance of his de-
 “ ceased lady, in honour of whom
 “ it was bestowed. But afterwards,
 “ from the confused accounts which
 “ I heard, first, that Mr. Gower ad-
 “ dressed a lady whose christian name
 “ was Charlotte, but whose other
 “ name I never knew ; and afterwards,
 “ that there was a treaty of marriage
 “ on foot between him and this la-
 “ dy, his sister, I apprehended that
 “ she had gone by the name of Char-
 “ lotte

“ lotte in England. My imperfect
“ knowledge of the French tongue,
“ in which all this was conveyed
“ to me, contributed, perhaps, to
“ continue me in my mistake: and
“ this supposition occasioned me to
“ puzzle the cause very much, in a
“ short conversation I had with one
“ Mr. Selwyn on this subject; when
“ all that I said in French of Ma-
“ dame Charlotte was meant of the
“ lady Isabella. My affairs, in the
“ mean time, called me so suddenly
“ home to England, that I was even
“ obliged to break an appointment
“ with the gentleman I mentioned;
“ else might this affair, in all pro-
“ bability,

“ bability, have been brought long
 “ before to an eclaircissement. In con-
 “ firmation of all that I have said,
 “ lady Isabel has in her possession,
 “ at present, a diamond ring, which
 “ lord Sommers once presented to
 “ his brother, and which he gave to
 “ the late Mrs. Gower. When this
 “ is produced, no farther doubt can
 “ surely remain of this matter. I
 “ would to Heaven, indeed, that it
 “ were otherwise; but we must all
 “ submit to our destiny.”

All proved exactly as he had said,
 to the unspeakable grief of the lady,
 who lies dangerously ill. Every thing
 here is in the greatest confusion:—

“ Heavens!

“Heavens ! exclaims the afflicted Gower, “and must I then lose my “new-found sister, by those very “means through which Providence “has been pleased to reveal her to “me ! Unhappy creature ! what do “I not suffer on thy account !”

To repeat the many affecting situations I have been witness to, would enlarge this epistle far beyond the bounds of a letter, I therefore hasten to subscribe myself, Sir, .

: Your faithful servant,

SEYMOUR.

L E T.

L E T T E R X C.

MISS CHARLOTTE CARLETON
to MISS ARABELLA HALE.

February 14.

O H, my Arabella! I am affrighted,
disordered beyond measure. I
am a prisoner in this place, and dare
not stir beyond the bounds of it.

Yesterday, as I was returning from
my afternoon's walk, the weather be-
ing fine, about sun-set I was sud-
denly seized by two men, who were
bearing me away by force: but my
shrieks, when thus attacked, brought
to my assistance a gentleman and his
servant from the neighbouring road,
who

who encountered and put to flight the villains, one of them seeming much wounded. During this skirmish, I fainted on the ground. When I recovered from my swoon, I beheld with astonishment Mr. Ramble, in the person of my deliverer. At sight of him I renewed my screams, till his every voice and gesture convinced me that I had no danger to apprehend from him, and, in the end, he conducted me safe to Arnold-Place.

Is it not strange, my Arabel, that I must thus be doomed to live in perpetual fears and uneasiness?—I wish the guests were returned.—We have

no

no defence here but one man-servant, Mr. Ramble excepted, who keeps a kind of continual patrol round the house ; but this is far from being agreeable to me, since I may well be timorous, notwithstanding what has happened, of trusting to any so nearly connected with Leland.

Write to me, my Arabella, and console me in my solitude ; for nothing can, like your letters, contribute to raise the spirits of your

CHARLOTTE.

L E T.

LETTER XCI.

From the same to the same.

February 19.

HERE are the guests returned,
my friend; but on such an account! — Hear it, and wonder at the ways of Heaven †!

* * * * *

Had they been united, what tortures must have rent my breast; tortures which those of the unhappy Gower and his Isabella alone could exceed. Even as it is, I fear I shall be instrumental in making two amiable persons miserable. Un-

† Here follows the story related in LET. 89.

Unhappy sister to the most generous of men ! what must be the feelings of her heart at present. I am under the greatest concern for her. It is easy to divine the sentiments of my heart upon this occasion.

It was Leland that was wounded, and Ramble has informed us of it. This young gentleman is indeed reformed, and seems to have a just sense of his past follies.

Adieu ! my dear ; — let me hear from you soon, and believe me to be

Your constant and faithful

CHARLOTTE.

[AFTER

[AFTER a long chasm in the History,
we find the subsequent Letters.]

L E T T E R XCII.

MISS CHARLOTTE ISABELLA GOWER
to CHARLES GOWER, Esq;

April 10.

STILL would you console me!
alas, my brother! a wound like
mine what balsam ever can suffice to
cure. The *Force of Nature* shewed
you, indeed, to love and esteem me
as you ought; whilst I (oh! shame
to delicacy! horrible to nature itself)
I, your sister, have pursued you with
a preposterous passion, which had
well-nigh proved the ruin of us both:
into

236 The Force of Nature ; or,

into such errors has my weak sex, and my still weaker reason, led me. Alas ! for me there is no peace, no felicity on this side of the grave. I consume away by degrees, and am verging towards that goal where alone I can hope to find rest ;—when I am gone, may no anxious thought of me intervene to disturb your tranquility !

May you, my brother, live long and happy !—And here I conjure you to hasten your union with the amiable Miss Carleton, for both your sakes : instead of injuring, it will impart to me the highest pleasure that I am, at present, capable of receiving, to hear
that

that you are joined, and mutually happy in each other.

What more can I add, my brother, that may any way contribute to your satisfaction? for now, indeed, I would scarcely spend a thought upon myself. My fun of joy is set; for me a dreary night remains, which will soon bury in oblivion

Your afflicted sister,

CHA. ISA. GOWER.

[A FRAG-

[A F R A G M E N T.]

Miss CHARLOTTE CARLETON to
Miss ARABELLA HALE.

April 21.

PRESSED thus on every side,
which way then must I act, my
Arabel? At last must I match myself
with Mr. Gower, notwithstanding the
misfortunes that have attended our
unhappy passion, notwithstanding the
situation of the poor Isabella, and
every other obstacle? The excellent
lady, indeed, whom last I mentioned,
with a truly noble spirit, urges me to
ensure my happiness, regardless of her
own. But fresh as the wound yet is,
which so lately tore her bleeding
heart,

heart, how can I think of pursuing such a conduct? To endeavour now at concealing from you, my friend, my real sentiments, would certainly be equally vain and ridiculous. I will own that Mr. Gower rises every day in my esteem; I will repeat that he is the only man with whom I ever can be happy. But on what terms must I receive this felicity? Advise me, my Arabella, in what manner I am to proceed in this affair, for on your friendly counsel will depend the resolutions of your

CHARLOTTE.

L E T-

L E T T E R X C I I I .

Miss A. HALE to Miss CHARLOTTE
CARLETON.

April 23.

IF Miss Carleton really wants my advice, I shall give it her without scruple, on condition that she will weigh it in the balance of *reason*, rather than of *delicacy*; and remit somewhat of her industry in raising obstacles to her own happiness.

Seriously, my Charlotte, I would advise you to follow the dictates of your own heart; poor Gower was on the point of making himself for ever unhappy, by disregarding the secret impulse of his: nor could the unfortunate

fortunate Isabella deny that (notwithstanding her blind passion caused her to affect as a lover him whom she ought to have regarded as a brother) her heart often checked her, and an universal tremor seizing on her, damped the pleasure which she would otherwise have experienced in his company. Your over-strained delicacy cooperated with her desires, or all the artifices of your common enemies could never have brought her and her worthy brother so near the verge of destruction as they were; but Leland and his vile associates took the opportunity of turning this to their own purpose.—And now I have men-

VOL. II. M tioned

tioned Leland, I cannot help observing, that I think you have cause to tremble at the very idea of him and his connexions ; and to whom must you fly for a safe-guard, but to Mr. Gower ? Reflect but a moment upon the consequences of your former conduct ; consider the wishes of your friends ; attend to Miss Gower's injunctions ; and lastly, think on your lover's feelings, whose passion for you continues unabated. Sum up all these things, and then reflect whether it behoves you any longer thus wilfully to resist your own happiness.

The son of lord Sommers is now dead ; take then his worthy heir to
your

your arms, with the full consent of
your friends and his, and secure to
yourself that felicity which you have
so justly merited, and the contributing
to which, by her advice or assistance,
will give the highest satisfaction to
your

ARABELLA.

[In] M 2

[In consequence of the last Letter, and others of the same import, an union was brought about between the two lovers; after which we find the following, addressed to captain Seymour, then absent on military business.]

L E T T E R XCIV.

CHARLES GOWER, Esq; to Captain
SEYMOUR.

May 28.

I AM now at length, my worthy friend, happy in the possession of my wishes. Three days since, my Charlotte resigned herself to my arms. Beautiful as an angel, all arrayed in white, the native garb of innocence,

l Ied

I led the dear lovely one to the altar, blushing like Aurora, where, warm in glowing youth and ripened beauty, I received her at the hands of Sir George Arnold, a gift more worth to me than universal empire. The happy day was spent with becoming mirth and festivity, and the night was doubly welcome, which gave into my arms what most I value upon earth.

All our friends were present ;—all but my poor sister ;—I sigh when I mention her ; her health is greatly impaired, and she is but the shadow of her former self. — O Seymour ! it is this alone that wounds my peace, and still threatens to dash the cup of

joy from my lips ! May Heaven restore the mourner, and my felicity will be complete.

Here is a new relation and former guardian of mine come amongst us, I mean Mr. Massey, who is returned from abroad, whither his misfortunes had driven him, possessed of great riches. I thought, indeed, he had been dead long since, and it was the interest of some to keep me in that error ; since it was easy to guess that he would settle his wealth upon me his nearest relation, if we should ever meet, or hold any correspondence ; and this has accordingly happened, to the confusion of our enemies, whose malice still continues, though their
power

power of doing mischief seems to be at an end.

Thus, my friend, the gifts of fortune are flowing in upon me; but I am far from placing my happiness in them. I seek a more true and permanent felicity, such as is placed in the heart:—let those who are witnesses of my actions judge whether I use the proper methods to attain it.

My compliments, with Mrs. Gower's, wait on you; and I am proud to subscribe myself

Your sincere friend,

GOWER.

L E T T E R XCV.

Mrs. GOWER to Miss ARABELLA
HALE.

May 29.

I WRITE in haste, and have only leisure for a few words. You find, you dear, mischievous creature, I have at last taken your advice, and need not blush to own myself obliged to you for it.

I am happy, my Arabella, beyond my warmest expectations. My lover, my husband, my hero (for now I may praise him) is all that the most refined of our sex could wish for in a consort, or desire in a man.—We are encompassed round with friends :—
pain,

pain, care, and sorrow are far away, and not a sigh escapes my bosom, but such as arise from tumultuous rapture, excepting only when I think on the poor Isabella. She is retired with Miss Sympson into the country, for the benefit of her health; where, I find, the good Cecilia is tenderly careful of her. May Heaven preserve her life, and restore her to her wonted tranquillity and peace of mind!

But when, my Arabella, shall I hear that you have altered your condition. Believe me, my dear, I long to hear that you have changed your name to Selwyn, as I have already done mine to that of

CHARLOTTE GOWER.

L E T

L E T T E R XCVI.

Miss ARABELLA HALE to Mrs.
GOWER.

June 3.

J OY to you, my fair friend! Did I not prophesy all this? “Your lover, your hero!” Mercy on us, how matrimony improves people! Well, I vow, my dear it becomes you so well, that I have half a mind to try the experiment myself. The man is at this very instant teizing me.—Be quiet, you wretch, and let me finish this short letter.—No, his mercer has brought me some patterns—A fiddle of your patterns!—Well then, my epistle will certainly be as short as
yours.

yours. My next, it is possible, may bear an altered signature. Seriously, my fair friend, I most heartily congratulate you on your union with the highly-deserving Mr. Gower. May every happiness this world can afford be showered upon you, through a long succession of years, and may every period of revolving time still add to your felicity!

But I am again interrupted; so I must hasten to assure you how much I am,

Your ever faithful friend,

ARABELLA HALE.

L E T-

L E T T E R X C V I I .

CHARLES GOWER, Esq; to JAMES
SELWYN, Esq;

June 9.

HOW unstable, my friend, is all human felicity ! all my happiness is clouded over. My poor sister expired last night. The day before yesterday I saw her. The fever, that long had preyed on her spirits was increased to such a height as to bring on a delirium, in the height of which I found her. “ Alas ! ” said she, “ are you come, my brother and my husband ; but hush ! tread softly, lest Charlotte Carleton should hear you. --- Nay, now I ought to hate you. What ! two wives ! Save me, save me ! O torture ! ” Then, after
fetching

fetching a deep fig, " My brother !
" oh ! can you forgive my ravings ?"
" My beloved Charlotte," said I,
" my ever-dear Isabella ! endeavour
" to compose yourself : to see you
" thus distracts me." Tenderly grasp-
ing my hand, " Ah Charles," said
the mourner, " these people who are
" placed about me flatter me, and
" say they will cure me ; they will
" tell you so too ; but do not believe
" them : my head and heart are en-
" tirely disordered, and you will soon
" lose your Isabella." Too soon, in-
deed, I lost her. Alas ! my sister is
no more. My Charlotte too lies ill
in London. Adieu ! pity your af-
flicted

GOWER.

L E T.

L E T T E R XVCIII.

Mrs. SELWYN to Lady SOMMERS.

Aug. 14.

I STEAL a moment, my dear lady, from the hurry of visitors, at once to condole with you on the death of the late lord Sommers, and to congratulate you on your recovery from sickness and your accession to a title. Does not this look like begging you to congratulate me on my accession to---a husband,

- It is even so, I have followed your advice, I have changed my condition, and must now subscribe myself,

Your ladyship's still constant

ARABELLA SELWYN.

L E T-

L E T T E R. XCIX.

CHARLES Lord SOMMERS to JAMES
SELWYN, Esq;

Aug. 20.

SINCERELY, my dear friend,
do I wish you, with your fair
spouse, all the happiness this world
can afford. As for me, abating the
grief which yet remains for my dear,
departed sister, and the tributary tear
due to the memory of my lately-de-
ceased uncle : abating these, I have
scarcely a wish or a desire that is not
satisfied in the fullness of content. ^{it}

My Charlotte grows every day
more amiable in my eyes. She pos-
sesses every virtue which can do ho-
nour

256 The Force of Nature; or,

nour to a woman. Piety and a spotless purity adorn her mind, and she appears herself to be the only one who is insensible to her perfections. Happy was the day, blessed the hour in which I beheld her, and doubly blessed the moment that gave her to my arms! If my present happiness can, in the nature of things, admit of any addition, I think I shall find it in your presence.

My dear lady desires to be remembered to you and Mrs. Selwyn: and I remain, in the hopes of seeing you here soon,

Your sincere friend,

SOMMERS.

L E T.

LETTER CXXI

From the same to the same.

September 10.

I COULD be very angry, Selwyn, with you and your fair spouse, for not favouring us hitherto with your presence in town; but as the day is now fixed on which we are to enjoy that pleasure, I shall forbear to chide, but must admit of no excuse at the time appointed.

Ramble, I find, lives very well in Holland, where it were better that he should remain, as Leland is dead, and there are those who vow vengeance against him. He is commenced merchant, having received great helps

258 The Force of Nature; or,

from Mr. Massey. Lord M**** was mortally wounded in a duel at Paris, whither he had withdrawn himself, and expired there, about 14 days since, in great agonies of body and mind. David Payne, who was taken at sea by pyrates, is now a slave in Tunis, where it is likely that he will be for ever detained, the vessel he was embarked in having made a desperate resistance.

But to leave these melancholy subjects, on which I forbear making any reflexions at this time, with pleasure I can inform you that my dear one is pregnant, a consideration by which my felicity is greatly heightened.----

The

The virtues, my Selwyn, of those around me, I daily see rewarded, not indeed by mere miracle, but by natural, secondary causes, which are the instruments in the hands of Divine Providence, whereby to work his will on earth, and by means of which the wicked are often made insensibly the abettors of their own destruction.

It is true indeed, that Virtue does not, cannot *always* meet with her recompence below ; she often sighs in affliction, while triumphant villany riots in ease and plenty. But are the vicious therefore happy ? let their own hearts declare, which are continually reproaching them, and pointing

ing

260 The Force of Nature; or,
ing with horror to a day of retribu-
tion in a future state.

Let us hope my friend, this will
never be our case, but that the mel-
lowing hand of Time, while it in-
creases our years, will add to our fel-
city.---And may we leave behind us
a lasting example to all those who
hear our story, to persevere in fol-
lowing the rules of VIRTUE, *whose*
ways are the ways of pleasantness, and
all whose paths are PEACE.

F I N I S.



E R R A T U M.

Vol. II. Chap. i. line 1, *for*, it is possible,
read, is it possible?

